

9 January 2018

Russian Federation : Criminal investigation against Oyub Titiev, head of Human Rights Center Memorial in Chechnya

On 9 January 2018, **Oyub Titiev** was taken from his car by people in road police uniform and brought at Kurchaloy regional police station. Later same day, he was accused of drugs' possession and criminal investigation was opened against him.

Oyub Titiev is a human rights defender who works at **Human Rights Center Memorial**, a human rights organisation that provides legal assistance to victims of gross human rights violations and is involved in human rights education, research and publications. After the killing of his colleague [Natalia Estemirova](#) in July 2009, Oyub Titiev became the head of the Chechen office of the organisation. In recent years, Oyub Titiev has received numerous threats linked to his human rights work.

On 9 January, 2018 at approximately 10:30AM, Titiev's car was stopped by five road police officers on the road to Kurchaloy, Chechnya, and the defender was taken from his car. For five hours his whereabouts were unknown. His lawyer went to the Kurchaloy police station and was initially told that Oyub Titiev was not among the detainees. Several hours later, the head of Kurchaloy police station confirmed that the defender was detained there. Six hours after the detention of Titiev, his lawyer was admitted to the police station and was able to meet with Titiev. He was informed that during the search of Titiev's car, police found a black plastic bag containing 180 grams of marijuana and the criminal investigation against Titiev was opened for "Illegal Making, Acquisition, Storage, Transportation, Sending, or Sale of Narcotic Drugs or Psychotropic Substances" under Article 228 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

The use of the Article 228 to discredit human rights activists is a tactic frequently used by Chechen authorities. In 2014, Ruslan Kutaev, Chechen civil society activist was sentenced on similar charges to four years in prison. He was released on parole at the very end of 2017. In 2016, [Zhalaudi Geriev](#), human rights defender and independent journalist well known for reporting abuses by Chechen authorities was sentenced to three years imprisonment on charges of drug possession. Both men were tortured in custody.

Oyub Titiev's colleagues at Human Rights Center Memorial have alerted the Russian Ombudswoman Tatiana Moskalkova and the head of the Presidential Human Rights Council Mikhail Fedotov.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the arrest and arbitrary detention of human rights defender Oyub Titiev, which it believes is solely motivated by his peaceful and legitimate work for human rights in the Russian Federation, and calls on the Russian authorities to immediately release the human rights defender.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Oyub Titiev, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee his physical and psychological security;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Oyub Titiev, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.