

28 September 2021

## **Russia: Woman human rights defender Valentina Chupik barred from entering Russia, stripped of her refugee status and detained**

On 25 September 2021, woman human rights defender **Valentina Chupik** was barred from returning to Russia, where she has resided with refugee status since 2006. Upon her arrival from Yerevan, Armenia, the Russian border patrol officers informed Valentina Chupik that she had violated border crossing regulations and informed her that Russian authorities had denied her refugee status which came into effect immediately. The patrol officers took away Valentina Chupik's travel document and detained her in the "clean zone" of the Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow, where she currently remains with no access to legal support and is at risk of being deported to Uzbekistan.

[Valentina Chupik](#) is a woman human rights defender and head of the NGO "Tong Jahoni", which focuses on migration issues in Russia by offering free legal support to migrants who experience pressure from the law enforcement officers. She is a vocal critic of the migration and refugee system in Russia. In 2005, she fled her native Uzbekistan after the events in Andijan on 13 May 2005, when Uzbekistan's military opened fire on unarmed civilians resulting in a mass killing. In the aftermath of this massacre, Valentina Chupik was subjected to torture and inhumane treatment by the Uzbek authorities. She received refugee status in Russia in 2009 which was extended by the Ministry of Interior in March 2021.

On 25 September 2021, upon her arrival to Russia from Armenia, the border patrol refused to allow Valentina Chupik to cross the border at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow. The border patrol officers confiscated her refugee passport, and, in exchange, offered her a document stating that she is barred from entering Russia until 2051. The documents stated that Valentina Chupik was stripped of her refugee status because she violated Federal Law on migrants #4258-1 "On Migrants" by "reporting knowingly false information, or presented false documents that served as the basis for recognition as a refugee, or committed another violation of the provisions of the Federal Law." The document also states that the woman human rights defender can appeal this decision with the Ministry of Interior.

Since 25 September 2021, lawyers from the Civic Assistance Committee have made multiple unsuccessful attempts to access Valentina Chupik in the "clean zone" of the Sheremetyevo airport. The woman human rights defender reported that the Federal Security Service officers took away her phone for some time and when they returned the device, she found two new contacts in it, that were previously unknown to her. During her detention, the officials at the airport reportedly subject Valentina Chupik to constant psychological pressure. She has spent more than 24 hours in a detention unit with extremely bright light, which negatively affected her eyesight. There are also no basic necessities in the cell, such as soap and towels, and there are no windows or ventilation.

On 27 September 2021, law enforcement officers raided the house of Valentina Chupik's elderly mother in a search for the woman human rights defender's documents. They also claimed that

Valentina Chupik violated Russian immigration law by staying at her mother's house instead of her official place of registration.

Prior to this incident, Valentina Chupik critiqued upcoming changes to Russian legislation on migrants and how these changes impinge on their rights. She has been a harsh critic of the latest edition of the federal migration law that systemically shifts the position of labour migrants in Russia by reintroducing the visa regime which will limit the number of migrants permitted to enter Russia and increase the amount of corruption schemes in the migration system.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned that woman human rights defender Valentina Chupik was denied entry into Russia, stripped of her refugee status and is currently being detained Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow at risk of being deported to Uzbekistan. Front Line Defenders believes that the woman human rights defender is being persecuted for her peaceful human rights work, in particular her work promoting and protecting migrants rights in Russia.

**Front Line Defenders call upon Russian authorities to:**

1. Immediately grant Valentina Chupik access to her lawyer of choice;
2. Release Valentina Chupik from detention and readmit her to Russia while she appeals the decision of the Ministry of Interior of the Russian Federation.
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia, including migrant rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions [including judicial harassment].

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