

6 December 2018

Russia: Human rights defender Lev Ponomarev sentenced to 25 days in administrative detention

On 5 December 2018, Tverskoy District Court of Moscow sentenced human rights defender **Lev Ponomarev** to 25 days in administrative detention for repeatedly violating the law on public assemblies.

[Lev Ponomarev](#) has been working as a human rights defender since 1980s. He is the head of the movement **For Human Rights** which keeps track of, and reports on, a wide spectrum of human rights issues including freedom of expression, refugee rights, trials monitoring and freedom of association. The human rights defender is a member of the **Moscow Helsinki Group**. He was also involved in the creation of **Human Rights Center “Memorial”**.

On 5 December 2018, Tverskoy District Court of Moscow charged Lev Ponomarev with part 8 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code for “repeated violation” of the law on public assemblies. The charges relate to a Facebook post published by the human rights defender on 25 October 2018. The post was also displayed the same day on the website of radio *Ekho Mosckvy* (Echo of Moscow). The post called for participation in the peaceful rally “For our and your children”, organised by the parents of a group of young activists, who were arrested under Russian “anti-extremism” and “anti-terrorism” laws, in order to show solidarity with the detainees. The peaceful rally in support of the prosecuted activists was held on 28 October 2018. The human rights defender had earlier sought the authorities’ permission to arrange the rally, however, the permission was denied.

The charges of repetitive violation are based on Lev Ponomarev’s arrest on 23 July 2018 after he held a one-man picket in support of some of the persecuted young activists, for which he was fined 10 000 RUB (around 130 EUR). According to the special Presidential Decree on enhanced security measures during the FIFA World Cup 2018, freedom of assembly in Russia was severely restricted until July 25, banning any public events that were not sanctioned by the authorities.

The 77-year old human rights defender is currently being held in the special detention center №1 on Simferopolsky Boulevard in Moscow. The precarious detention conditions are particularly challenging for him due to his advanced age. Lev Ponomarev intends to appeal the decision.

Lev Ponomarev was subject to different forms of harassment because of his work in the defence of human rights the past. In March 2009, he was assaulted and beaten by unknown men in Moscow. On 28 December 2008, he was followed on his way home. In September 2006, he was arrested and detained for organising a peaceful demonstration without official authorisation.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the sentencing of human rights defender Lev Ponomarev especially as it comes in the context of an intensifying crackdown on freedom of expression and assembly in Russia.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately release Lev Ponomarev and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;

2. Ensure that the treatment of Lev Ponomarev , 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;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.