

28 October 2021

### Crimea: Prominent human rights lawyer Edem Semedliaev detained

On 25 October 2021, the Russian riot police team and representatives of the Centre to Counteract Extremism harassed and detained human rights defender and lawyer **Edem Semedliaev** while he visited his clients in the Central Police Precinct of Simferopol, who had been detained earlier that day.

[Edem Semedliaev](#) is a human rights defender and lawyer. Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, he has been actively involved in legally representing and defending the rights of the Crimean Tatars, who have become one of the major targets for the authorities, alongside civil society activists and journalists.

On 25 October 2021 the appeal hearing of three Crimean Tatars, who were charged for their membership in the Muslim organisation Hizb-ut Tahrir in November 2020, took place at the Crimean Garrison Court. Many people, including civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists from the Crimean Solidarity Group arrived at the Court to support the detainees. At around 11 AM, a Court representative came out of the building and claimed that the supporters present were violating the current COVID-19 measures in place and ordered them to leave. At that time, representatives from the riot police team started to detain the supporters in front of the Court. The riot police were accompanied by representatives of the Federal Security Service and Center for Countering Extremism. In total, 21 individuals, including members of the Crimean Solidarity Group and civic journalists, were detained.

Later that day, Edem Semedliaev and other lawyers arrived at the Central Police Precinct of Simferopol to offer legal assistance to those detained in front of the Court. Edem Semedliaev was the only lawyer who was permitted to enter the precinct. When the human rights lawyer started talking with one of his detained clients, a police officer began pressuring both of them and threatened the defendant with prosecution for “disobeying the lawful orders of a police officer.” Responding to such threats, Edem Semedliaev stated that he would voice-record the events in the precinct. The police officer said that Edem Semedliaev was violating the law and filed civic charges against him under Article 19.3 of the Russian Code of Civil Conduct, citing once again that the human rights defender was disobeying police orders.

The police officer then ordered Edem Semedliaev to undress to undergo a personal search. The representatives of the Center to Counteract Extremism stated that they needed to see if the human rights lawyer had any “extremists” tattoos on his body. When Edem Semedliaev refused, citing Article 28 of the Constitution, the officer issued another charge sheet with the same Civic Code violation and placed him in detention in a temporary detention ward in Sudak, Crimea, where he spent a night before being released after the court hearing because the protocols had to be sent back to the police precinct. The charges against the human rights defender still stand and he may face a further 15 days in prison if charged.

The targeting and systemic persecution of human rights lawyers by the Russian Federal Security Services forms part of a worrying trend in Crimea since its annexation in 2014. This systemic persecution includes judicial harassment, office raids, disciplinary penalties, and disbarment threats. Another prominent Crimean human rights lawyer **Emil Kurbedinov** was repeatedly

sentenced to short-term detentions in 2017 and 2018 for publishing Hizb-ut Tahrir related materials on his social media pages. Shortly after Emil Kurbedinov was arrested in 2017, Russian Federal Security Services raided his and Edem Semedliaev's office and seized various personal and professional items belonging to them. Another prominent Crimean human rights defender and lawyer, **Lilia Gemedzy**, faced a disciplinary punishment for "repeated violation of the Court hearing regulations" in 2020.

Front Line Defenders expresses grave concerns about the repeated persecution of human rights lawyers by Russian law enforcement bodies in the territory of annexed Crimea. Front Line Defenders call upon the authorities to cease the persecution and judicial harassment of human rights lawyer Edem Semedliaev for his non-violent human rights work.

**Front Line Defenders urges the Russian authorities to:**

1. Immediately cease judicial persecution of human rights defender and lawyer Edem Semedliaev and drop all charges against him it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease the practice of judicial prosecution and other means of persecution of human rights lawyers in Crimea;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Crimea and guarantee in all circumstances that they 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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