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Russia: Human rights defender Vyacheslav Slusarev fined for monitoring protests

On 15 February human right defender and member of the United Group of Civic Observers **Vyacheslav Slusarev** was charged with participating in an unauthorised protest and was fined 10,000 roubles (approximately 100 euro). The human rights defender had been monitoring the protest in support of Alexei Navalny in Syktyvkar.

[Vyacheslav Slusarev](#) is an LGBTIQ+ rights defender, board member of the regional branch of the Russian Historical, Educational and Human Rights Society Memorial and a member of the [United Group of Civic Observers \(OGON\)](#). The OGON is a public association operating on the basis of norms of international human rights law and conducts human rights monitoring of public events, trials and the work of the law enforcement. Vyacheslav Slusarev is well known for developing an observation mechanism for semi-closed social facilities such as psycho-neurological boarding schools, facilities for persons with disabilities and elderly people, which has been used in other regions of Russia.

On 23 January 2021, Vyacheslav Slusarev monitored the protest in support of Alexei Navalny in Syktyvkar. The human rights defender was wearing a white vest with the OGON logo on it as well as an OGON badge. The OGON notified the relevant authorities that they were going to monitor this protest in advance. On 9 February 2021, Vyacheslav Slusarev was detained at the entrance of his house and was brought to the police station as a suspect under part 5 of Article 20.2. of the Administrative Code for “violation by a participant of a public event of the established procedure for holding a meeting, rally, demonstration, march or picket”. The human rights defender was released later that day after the police prepared a report on an administrative offence against Vyacheslav Slusarev.

On 15 February, the Syktyvkar City Court found Vyacheslav Slusarev guilty under part 5 of Article 20.2. of the Administrative Code and imposed a fine of 10,000 roubles (approximately 100 euro). According to authorities, in order to prove that he was present at the protest as a human rights observer, he was required to present a certificate as an observer and proof of an assignment to observe the protest. However, the law does not oblige the observer to present such documents during the protests. The human rights defender emphasised that the court ignored all references to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and international law which determine his status as a legitimate observer. The judge denied the request to summon the prosecutor and the policemen who prepared the report. The document of the court’s decision was not provided to Vyacheslav Slusarev, the judge said that he would receive it within three days.

On 31 January 2021, two other members of the OGON, **Yuriy Kuzin** and **Sergey Sokolov**, were detained in Moscow while monitoring the protest. On 2 February they were charged under part 6.1 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code to 4 days of administrative arrest. On 4 February the Moscow City Court rejected their appeal.

Since opposition leader Alexei Navalny returned to Russia, hundreds of thousands of Russians have been taking part in protests to demand the release of the jailed opposition politician. Journalists and human rights defenders have faced an unprecedented level of pressure in response to their work covering and monitoring the protests. On 31 January 2021, six members of the Committee Against Torture, **Timur Rahmatulin**, **Konstantin Gusev**, **Magomed Alamov**, **Sergey Shunin**, **Ekaterina Vanslova** and **Igor Kalyapin** were [detained](#) while monitoring the protests in support of Alexei Navalny in Nizhny Novgorod, Orenburg and Pyatigorsk. On 23 January, another member of the Committee Against Torture, Evgeniy Chilikov was detained.

Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial prosecution and ongoing harassment of Vyacheslav Slusarev and other members of the OGON and believes that they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful human rights monitoring of the protests in Russia.

Front Line Defenders urges the Russian authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop charges against Vyacheslav Slusarev as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the administrative proceedings against Vyacheslav Slusarev with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Cease the practice of detentions and judicial prosecution of human rights defenders monitoring protests in Russia;
4. Guarantee public observers and representatives of civil and human rights organisations the freedom to monitor public assemblies;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia 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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