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Russia: Human rights defender Sergey Babinets fined RUR 100,000 (approximately EUR 2000)

On 14 September 2022, the Soviet District Court of the city of Nizhny Novgorod fined human rights defender **Sergey Babinets** for violating the foreign agents law through the currently shut down human rights organization “Committee against Torture” (CAT). According to the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, who filed the case, Sergey Babinets violated Article 19.7.5-3 of the Code of Administrative Violations of the Russian Federation for being the former chairperson of the CAT. The human rights defender was found guilty for the lack of “foreign agent” label on some of the online publications published by CAT before being shut down and ordered him to pay a fine of RUR 100,000 (approximately EUR 2000). **Sergey Babinets** will appeal this decision.

[Sergey Babinets](#) is a human rights lawyer and the ex-Chairperson of the Russian-based human rights organisation “Committee Against Torture” (CAT) that was shut down on 10 June 2022 after it was listed as a foreign agent. CAT, established in 2000, used to be a prominent human rights organisation in Russia which investigated allegations of torture by state agents and represented victims’ of torture’s interests in the investigative bodies and the court, including the European Court of Human Rights. Human rights defenders who used to work with CAT were regularly subjected to defamation campaigns, physical attacks, detentions, and judicial persecution because of their peaceful human rights work.

On 14 September 2022, the Soviet District Court of the city of Nizhny Novgorod fined the human rights defender Sergey Babinets for violating the foreign agents law through the currently shut down human rights organization Committee against Torture (CAT). During the Court hearing, the Ministry of Justice’s representatives argued that, despite CAT being shut down, the organisation is still listed as a “foreign agent” and thus human rights defender Sergey Babinets – as CAT the former chairperson - can be fined for the lack of “foreign agent” label on the online publications made before the organisation was listed as a foreign agent. The Ministry of Justice stated that they disregarded the information that CAT no longer exists. They only took into consideration the fact that the organisation is still listed as a foreign agent. As a result, Sergey Babinets was found guilty and the judge ordered him to pay a fine of RUR 100,000 (approximately EUR 2000). The human rights defender will appeal this decision.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the judicial harassment and prosecution of human rights defender Sergey Babinets and reiterates its concern over the Russian Government's continued use of foreign agents laws to prevent human rights defenders from exercising their legitimate and peaceful human rights work in the country.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the Russian Authorities to:

1. Cease the prosecution and judicial harassment of human rights defender Sergey Babinets, and cancel the fine;

2. Abolish the discriminatory “foreign agents” law;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Russia’s international human rights obligations and commitments.

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