

4 February 2021

Russia: Seven members of the Committee Against Torture detained while monitoring protests in Russia

On 31 January 2021, six human rights defenders and 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.

The **Committee Against Torture (CAT)** – is a prominent human rights organisation in Russia. Established in 2000, it investigates allegations of torture by state agents and represents victims' of torture interests in the investigative bodies and the court, including the European Court of Human Rights in cases where domestic remedies are ineffective. The CAT also assists victims of torture in obtaining compensation and provides them with medical rehabilitation support. Based on its casework and research, it publishes information on the systemic barriers to effective investigation and prosecution of torture in Russia. After the Ministry of Justice of Russia added the Committee Against Torture to the register of 'foreign agents' in January 2015, the organisation was dissolved. The successor of CAT, the Committee for Prevention of Torture, was added to the register of 'foreign agents' a year later. The CAT is currently operating under its original name.

On 31 January, members of the CAT, Sergey Shunin and Ekaterina Vanslova were detained while they were monitoring the protests in support of Alexei Navalny in Nizhny Novgorod. Sergey Shunin was brought to the police station as a suspect under part 6.1 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code for "participation in an unauthorized meeting, rally, demonstration, procession or picket that caused interference with the functioning of life support facilities, transport or social infrastructure...". He was released that evening under the obligation to appear in court at a later date. Ekaterina Vanslova was held in detention until 1 February, when the court charged her 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". A fine of 10,000 rubles (approximately 100 euro) was also imposed on the woman human rights defender.

On the same day, a chairman of the CAT and member of the Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation, [Igor Kalyapin](#) was also detained in Nizhny Novgorod and released a few hours later. On 30 January, Igor Kalyapin wrote an open letter to Vyacheslav Rekhtin, the First Deputy Prosecutor of the Nizhny Novgorod Region, about violations of the rights of people detained at the protest on 23 January, including the fact that the attorneys of many the detained were not allowed access to their clients after detention.

On 31 January, two lawyers and members of the CAT, Konstantin Gusev and Magomed Alamov, were detained in Pyatigorsk when monitoring a protest on January 31. After spending a night at the local police department they were charged under part 1 of Article 20.2.2. of the Administrative Code for "organisation of a mass simultaneous stay and (or) movement of citizens in public places..." and 10-days administrative detention was imposed on them. On the same day, another lawyer and CAT member, Timur Rahmatulin, was violently detained by unknown people in plain clothes when he was observing the protest in Orenburg. He was accused of disobedience to police officers and participation in an unauthorised meeting. After spending two days in detention the charge of disobedience to police against Timur Rahmatulin

was dropped and he was released on 2 February. The charge of participation in an unauthorised meeting was postponed indefinitely.

On 23 January, a producer and lawyer of the CAT, **Evgeniy Chilikov** was detained in Nizhny Novgorod while monitoring the protest. A few hours later the human rights defender was released from the local police department under the obligation to appear in court at a later date. He is suspected of 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”.

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 January 31, two members of the United Group of Civic Observers, **Yuriy Kuzin** and **Sergey Sokolov**, were detained in Moscow while monitoring the protest. On February 2, they were charged under part 6.1 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code to 4 days of administrative arrest.

Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial prosecution and ongoing harassment of human rights defenders and members of the Committee Against Torture: Timur Rahmatulin, Konstantin Gusev, Magomed Alamov, Sergey Shunin, Ekaterina Vanslova, Evgeniy Chilikov and Igor Kalyapin. Their detention follows a number of acts of reprisal against and judicial harassment of human rights defenders and journalists by the law enforcement representatives in Russia since the protests in support of Alexei Navalny began. Front Line Defenders believes the seven aforementioned human rights defenders are being targeted solely as a result of their work at independent monitoring on human rights violations during the current protests in Russia.

Front Line Defenders urges the Russian authorities to:

1. Immediately stop the judicial prosecution and harassment against Timur Rahmatulin, Konstantin Gusev, Magomed Alamov, Sergey Shunin, Ekaterina Vanslova, Evgeniy Chilikov, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Cease the practice of detentions and judicial prosecution of human rights defenders monitoring protests in Russia;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of members of the Committee Against Torture and other human rights defenders in Russia;
4. 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.