

27 April 2021

### **Russia: Human rights defender Sergey Davidis arrested in response to a retweet**

On 27 April 2021, the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow charged human rights defender **Sergey Davidis** to 10 days administrative arrest for “organization or holding of a public event without filing, in accordance with the established procedure, a notification of the holding of a public event”. The charges are based on a retweet by Sergey Davidis on 18 April 2021, of a tweet about a rally in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny planned for 21 April 2021. Sergey Davidis was detained on 25 April 2021 and was held at the Department of Internal Affairs of the Meshchansky District of Moscow for more than two days before the court ordered to arrest him.

[Sergey Davidis](#) is a prominent human rights defender, a member of the Board of the Human Rights Center Memorial (HRC Memorial) and leads the program “Support for Political Prisoners”. The program gathers information about cases of unlawful, politically-motivated criminal prosecutions, and assists those facing prosecution in acquiring lawyers and other necessary support to assist victims of politically-motivated prosecutions and their families, and also organises events in support of political prisoners in Russia.

On 27 April 2021, the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow charged Sergey Davidis to 10 days administrative arrest on the charge of “organization or holding of a public event without filing, in accordance with the established procedure, a notification of the holding of a public event” under Part 2, Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation. The charges are based on Sergey Davidis’ retweet of a tweet by Leonid Volkov, a colleague of Alexei Navalny, on 18 April 2021 about an upcoming rally on 21 April 2021, in support of the opposition leader. The post contains a link to a video prepared by Alexei Navalny’s team, titled “Final battle between good and neutrality”, and calls for participation in the rally on 21 April, to demand the release of the opposition leader, who is reportedly in critical condition in prison. The rally’s aims were also to protest the Moscow City Prosecutor’s Office legal claim to designate the Anti-Corruption Foundation and the regional headquarters of Alexei Navalny as “extremist”.

Prior to the hearing before the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow on 27 April 2021, Sergey Davidis’ lawyer petitioned for the hearing to be rescheduled due to it clashing with the hearing of another client, however the Court rejected the request, leaving the human rights defender with just 40 minutes to prepare the relevant case documents and find a lawyer prior to the hearing. Sergey Davidis is due to serve the administrative arrest in special detention facility no.2 in Mnyovniki, Moscow.

On the morning of 25 April 2021, after leaving his apartment, human rights defender Sergey Davidis was detained by two plainclothes police officers on the staircase of his apartment building. The human rights defender was informed that he was being transferred to a police department, where an administrative protocol against him was to be drawn up. Sergey Davidis’ lawyer was not allowed to accompany his client on the way to the police department. The human rights defender was made to stay in the police department for a night as the police officers reportedly said they cannot prepare an administrative protocol on a Sunday. The protocol was drawn up the following day, on the evening of 26 April 2021. Sergey Davidis was detained in the Department of Internal Affairs of the Meshchansky District for over 48 hours, exceeding the limit for administrative detention according to Russian law.

Since opposition leader Alexei Navalny returned to Russia in January 2021, hundreds of thousands of people have been taking part in protests to demand his release from prison. [Journalists](#) and [human rights defenders](#) have faced an unprecedented level of pressure from the authorities in response to their work covering and [monitoring](#) the [protests](#).

Mass detentions are not reported to have taken place at the rally on 21 April 2021 in Moscow, as they have in previous rallies. However, following the rally, police visited the homes of dozens of people who had posted about the rally on social media and/or attended the rally and questioned them about it. Some of those who were visited by police were detained, on suspicion of violating the requirements of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arrest and judicial prosecution of Sergey Davidis and believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the continued targeting of human rights defenders in Russia for carrying out their legitimate and peaceful human rights work, defending the right to peaceful assembly and association, and freedom of expression.

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

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop the charges against and cease the judicial harassment against Sergey Davidis, as it is believed that it is solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in defense of human rights;
2. Take all necessary measures to ensure the immediate release of Sergey Davidis and guarantee his physical and psychological security and integrity;
3. Cease the practice of detentions and judicial prosecution of human rights defenders monitoring the protests in Russia and post about the protests on social media and journalists covering these protests;
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.