

7 December 2018

Ukraine: Administrative detention of human rights lawyer Emil Kurbedinov

On 7 December 2018, Kievsky district court of Simferopol condemned Emil Kurbedinov to five days of administrative detention under Article 20.3 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation for “propagandising for extremist organisations”. The charges are linked to the post on his personal Facebook page that dates back to 2013.

Emil Kurbedinov is an outspoken human rights lawyer in Crimea. Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, he has been actively involved in the defence of the rights of Crimean Tatars who became one of the targeted groups, along with other civil society activists and journalists. He provides people with legal help, observing searches at activists’ homes and uses social media and international conferences for bringing public attention to human rights violations in Crimea. Emil Kurbedinov is a [recipient](#) of 2017 Front Line Defenders Award for Human Rights Defenders at Risk.

On 7 December 2018, Kievsky District Court of Simferopol condemned Emil Kurbedinov to five days of administrative detention. On 6 December 2018, Emil Kurbedinov was detained on the way to his office by officers of the Centre for Counteracting Extremism. He was brought to the main directorate of the Ministry of Interior in Simferopol where he was charged with “propagandising for extremist organisations” under the Article 20.3 of the Administrative code of the Russian Federation. Later the same day, Kievsky District Court of Simferopol started the hearing of his case. The charges are related to a repost that dates back to June 2013 on Kurbedinov’s Facebook page that, according to the court, displayed “symbols of the terrorist organisation “Hizb-ut Tahrir”. Emil Kurbedinov was previously sentenced to 10 days’ detention for exactly the same post on his personal page on the social network Vkontakte on 26 January 2017. Emil Kurbedinov did not contest the fact that in 2013 he covered the demonstrations of “Hizb-ut Tahrir” which took place in Crimea. Under Ukrainian legislation “Hizb-ut Tahrir” was not a forbidden organisation, while the Russian Supreme Court designated it as a terrorist organisation in 2003.

On 6 November 2018, Kurbedinov received a formal warning “on prevention of extremist activity” that was delivered by a representative of the Prosecutor Office, who was accompanied by several masked men. Similar warnings were given to Kurbedinov’s colleagues, human rights lawyers Edem Semedliaev and Lilia Gemedzhi on 27 October 2018, during the meeting of “Crimean solidarity”, an initiative created by families members of victims of political persecution in Crimea. Diliaver Memetov, coordinator of “Crimean solidarity” also received the warning on the same day. The warning states that the Prosecutor’s Office received the information that Crimean Tatar activists linked to the terrorist organisation “Hizb-ut Tahrir” are planning a number of pickets in support to those charged with “Huzb-ut Tahrir” membership, and that according to the information received the above mentioned lawyers are believed to be organisers of such actions.

Front Line Defenders believes that the administrative detention of Emil Kurbedinov is a part of a larger campaign framing human rights defenders of Crimean Tatar origin as extremists and linked to “Hizb-ut Tahrir” organisation. This defamation campaign and judicial persecution are in fact in reprisals for the human rights work and vocal position of Emil Kurbedinov and other human rights lawyers who denounce human rights violation on the peninsula.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Russia to:

1. Immediately quash the sentence, release Emil Kurbedinov from administrative detention and cease all further forms of surveillance and harassment against him.
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from intimidation of human rights lawyers;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Crimea are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.