

19 October 2018

Russia: Human rights defender abducted and reportedly tortured in Ingushetia

On 15 October 2018, Amnesty International reported that its employee, **Oleg Kozlovsky**, had been kidnapped and tortured by unidentified assailants in Magas, Ingushetia, on 6 October 2018. At the time of the announcement, the human rights defender and his family had already left the country for safety reasons.

[Oleg Kozlovsky](#) has been working in the sphere of human rights for more than eighteen years. The main focus of his work is on civic activism, civil society capacity building and non-violent resistance movements. Oleg Kozlovsky has received the Human Rights Award from Human Rights First and the Ion Ratiu Democracy Award. Lately, he has been working as a researcher for the international human rights organisation **Amnesty International**.

On 5 October 2018, Oleg Kozlovsky arrived in Magas, the capital of the Republic of Ingushetia, to monitor the protests against a controversial border deal between Ingushetia and neighbouring Chechnya that were taking place the following day. On the evening of 6 October 2018, a young man, unknown to Oleg Kozlovsky, came to his hotel in Magas, and invited him to meet one of the rally organisers. Oleg Kozlovsky followed the man outside and was then taken to a car where two masked men presented themselves to him as officials of the Center for Countering Extremism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia, without showing any documentation. They took away his belongings including his phone and video camera and interrogated him in the car. He was taken outside of the city with his head bent to his knees so that he could not see where they were going.

Oleg Kozlovsky was taken to a field where the assailants stripped him of his clothes, took pictures and videos of him, threatening to make them public and to sexually assault him. According to the human rights defender, they were trying to convince him to cooperate with the Center for Countering Extremism. After he refused to agree, the assailants beat him up, broke his rib and mock-executed him, putting a gun to his head and saying they would shoot him. After multiple mock-executions and threats to kill his children, Oleg Kozlovsky agreed to keep everything that happened to him secret in return for his freedom.

On 7 October 2018, Oleg Kozlovsky managed to come back to Moscow after the assailants left him next to the airport in Vladikavkaz, Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. His phone and camera were never returned to him.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the abduction and reported torture of Oleg Kozlovsky. As the human rights defender is planning to return to Russia as soon as possible, Front Line Defenders is also concerned about his physical safety and psychological well-being upon return. The situation for human rights defenders in North Caucasus has been deteriorating in the last years. [Judicial harassment](#), [trumped up charges](#), [physical](#) and [arson attacks](#) against human rights defenders prevent them from exercising their peaceful legitimate work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of the Russian Federation to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction, reports of torture and robbery of Oleg Kozlovsky, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Oleg Kozlovsky as well as of the members of his family;

3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Russia and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Board of Trustees

Denis O'Brien, Mary Lawlor, Michel Forst, Kieran Mulvey, Noeline Blackwell, David Sykes, Maria Mulcahy, Jim Conway, Hina Jilani, James L. Cavallaro

Front Line Leadership Council

Hanan Ashrawi, Robert Badinter, Bono, His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, Indai Lourdes Sajor, Wangari Muta Maathai, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Desmond Tutu

Registered Charity Number CHY 14029