



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Human Rights Defender Oyub Titiev in Chechnya Should Be Immediately Released and All Charges against Him Dropped

To the Government of the Russian Federation

18 May 2018

The 8th General Assembly (GA) of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum has gathered in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 15-18 May, 2018, bringing together more than a hundred representatives of civil society organisations from across Russia and many EU member states. Participants of the Assembly expressed their outrage about the continued incarceration of and criminal charges against our colleague Oyub Titiev, head of Human Rights Center Memorial's Grozny office in Chechnya. Our members expressed their solidarity with the persecuted human rights defender and his colleagues in "Memorial".

Oyub Titiev is highly respected in the international human rights community, as well as in the North Caucasus, where he is part of a small group of brave human rights defenders still working to uncover and document grave ongoing human rights violations. Titiev has led Memorial's work in Chechnya since the horrific murder of his colleague Natalia Estemirova in 2009. In recent years, he received numerous threats aimed at making him quit human rights work.

Oyub Titiev has been held in pre-trial detention since 9 January when he was charged with the illegal possession of drugs, reportedly a large amount of marijuana. He turned these charges down in strongest terms and filed a complaint, demanding investigation of planting of the drugs on him by the police. Similar trumped-up charges have previously led to several years' imprisonment for activists and independent journalists in Chechnya. Framing people for drug crimes has become an increasingly frequent tactic used by Chechnya's authorities to punish and discredit their critics in the eyes of society.

We are convinced that Titiev was arrested in retaliation for his human rights work, without any plausible proof of his guilt. We consider the suggestion that a highly experienced human rights defender, former school teacher, a well-known proponent of healthy lifestyle and a devout Muslim such as 60 year-old Oyub Titiev would travel around Chechnya with any amount of drugs in his car to be totally absurd, and to be an evidence only of the tactics employed by Chechen authorities against principled human rights defenders. We believe Chechen authorities are seeking to frame Titiev and close down the extremely important work of Human Rights Center Memorial in the region by threats and harassment.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the Russian government to immediately release Oyub Titiev, as there are no legal grounds for his detention in custody. Secondly, we demand a full and

