

# URGENT ACTION

## IMPRISONED JOURNALIST MUST BE RELEASED

**Stanislav Aseev, a freelance journalist, who was missing for several weeks, is held by the Russia-backed separatists from the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”) in eastern Ukraine. They accuse him of “espionage”.**

Freelance journalist **Stanislav Aseev** has been held in incommunicado detention by the pro-Russian separatists from the self-proclaimed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”) in eastern Ukraine, since 2 June. Initially, the de facto DNR authorities denied knowing his fate and whereabouts.

On 16 July, an agent of the de facto DNR’s “Ministry of State Security” (MGB) confirmed to Stanislav Aseev’s mother that her son was in their custody. He informed her that the MGB suspected Aseev of “espionage”, an accusation which appears to be related to Stanislav Aseev’s reporting from Donetsk as an undercover journalist. No pro-Ukrainian or independent media are allowed to report from DNR-controlled territory.

The mother of Stanislav Aseev was able to meet him once, for just 10 minutes, in the presence of agents of the MGB. She is gravely concerned about his safety and well-being. At the time of writing, Stanislav Aseev remains under “investigation” by the MGB.

### **Please write immediately in Russian, English or your own language:**

- Demanding that Stanislav Aseev is immediately released;
- Urging that he, and any other journalist, is able to carry out legitimate journalist activities without interference, including when travelling in and out of the territories affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine;
- Reminding them that under international humanitarian law, which is binding on all parties in conflict, arbitrary, abusive and prolonged detention of civilians is prohibited

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 SEPTEMBER 2017 TO:**

#### Head of the DNR

Aleksandr Zakharchenko  
Donetsk, Ukraine  
Email: op@dnr-sovet.su  
Salutation: Dear Mr. Zakharchenko

#### Head of MGB

Vladimir Pavlenko  
Donetsk, Ukraine  
Email: mgbdnr@yandex.ru  
Salutation: Dear Mr. Pavlenko

#### **And copies to:**

Ombudsperson of the DNR  
Darya Morozova  
Donetsk, Ukraine  
Email: ombudsman\_dnr@mail.ru

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 160/17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR50/6725/2017/en/>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Stanislav Aseev is a freelance journalist in the separatist-controlled Donetsk who, until his captivity on 2 June, was working under a pseudonym, reporting about daily life in the self-styled “Donetsk People’s Republic” (“DNR”).

On 3 June, as they could not find Stanislav Aseev and there were no answers from his phone, his family went to look for him at the flat where he lives. Despite waiting there for hours there was no sign of him. Increasingly concerned, his family returned to the flat on 4 June, with his landlord. When they opened the door they saw clear signs that the flat had been searched.

Stanislav Aseev's family has appealed to the de facto DNR authorities, including the local police and the body known as the “Ministry of State Security” (MGB), regarding his whereabouts. As yet, they have not received a response. They have also visited two detention centres in Donetsk, but were not able to find him.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine began in the first months of 2014, after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation. In April and May 2014, opponents of the new Kyiv government occupied buildings belonging to the local administrations and law enforcement agencies in several towns in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of eastern Ukraine (Donbass). Demanding increased local autonomy or independence from Ukraine, and closer ties with Russia, protest organizers formed armed groups, backed by the Russian Federation, and proclaimed the creation of the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and “Luhansk People’s Republic”. In response, the authorities in Kyiv launched what they characterized as a “counter terrorist operation” (antiteroristichna operatsiya – ATO) aimed at retaking control of the area.

In the self-proclaimed “republics”, local security services operate with no checks and balances, detain individuals arbitrarily and hold them in their own detention facilities. Often, detainees are subjected to 30 days of “administrative detention” during which they have no access to the outside world. Amnesty International and other organizations monitoring human rights have also documented cases when such detainees are tortured and ill-treated in order to extract a forced “confession”, which is then used by a de facto court for conviction. For more details about such practices, please see the joint report by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch *You Don’t Exist: Arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture in eastern Ukraine*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur50/4455/2016/en/>

The de facto DNR does not have properly constituted courts which meet international law and standards. Article 321 of its “Criminal Code”, which deals with “espionage”, carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison or, in war time, death. Under international humanitarian law, the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court which complies with international law and standards on fair trial is a war crime.

Name: Stanislav Aseev

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 160/17 Index: EUR 50/6778/2017 Issue Date: 21 July 2017