

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT DEFENDER MUST BE RELEASED

The final hearing in the trial against Oyub Titiev, prominent human rights defender and head of Memorial's Grozny office, will take place on 11 March. He is facing up to 10 years in prison if convicted on fabricated drug-related charges. He is a prisoner of conscience, persecuted solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights and should be released immediately and unconditionally.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation
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Russian Federation
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Dear Prosecutor General,

*I am writing to you to express my concern with the ongoing trial against **Oyub Titiev**, a prominent Chechen human rights defender and the head of the Grozny office of the Russian NGO Memorial.*

Oyub Titiev was arbitrarily arrested on 9 January 2018 on fabricated drug-related charges and has since remained in detention. The hearing of his case started in Shali City Court on 19 July 2018 and is expected to conclude in the coming weeks. The trial has been marred by numerous irregularities and Oyub Titiev's right to fair trial might have been repeatedly violated ever since his arrest by police. During the court hearings, it became apparent that the prosecution's case does not stand up to basic scrutiny. Thus, prosecution witnesses – almost all of them members of the Chechen police – continuously “forgot” the circumstances of Oyub Titiev's detention, could not provide a coherent account of the events on that day or denied some obvious facts, including those that are supported by photographic evidence. At the same time, the prosecution kept insisting that perfectly legitimate requests by the defence (for instance, forensic examination of materials or admission of documents) be rejected, and the judge consistently upheld the prosecution's position. This strategy was particularly apparent during the last few hearings when the defence team attempted to present evidence that would strongly indicate that charges against Oyub Titiev had been fabricated.

Oyub Titiev faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted. Oyub Titiev is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful human rights work, to silence him and obstruct his organisation's human rights work.

I urge you to use your authority to ensure that fabricated charges against Oyub Titiev are dropped and he is released immediately and unconditionally.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The hearings on Oyub Titiev's case resumed on 14 January 2019 after a three-week break. Since then, a dozen hearings took place during which the defence made numerous motions to the judge which would prove the fabricated nature of the case, all of which were rejected.

One of the latest motions concerned the request to exclude as inadmissible evidence the bag with drugs allegedly found in Oyub Titiev's car on 9 January 2018. The defence team argued that the bag was handled in violation of basic rules on handling material evidence. According to the case file, the drugs were sent for expert examination in a different package to that in which they had allegedly been found. This implies that the package, which was supposed to remain sealed, had been opened.

On 14 February, the European Parliament adopted a [Resolution](#) on the situation in Chechnya and the case of Oyub Titiev, calling for his immediate release and stating that he is prosecuted on fabricated charges. The Resolution also called on international sports personalities and artists to refrain from participating in public events in Chechnya or those sponsored by its leadership.

Oyub Titiev is one of Russia's most courageous human rights defenders and has led Memorial's Grozny office for over nine years, providing assistance and documenting human rights violation in Chechnya. Memorial and its staff have been facing retaliation and smear campaigns for peacefully defending human rights for years. Natalia Estemirova, Oyub Titiev's predecessor, was abducted and killed in 2009, and other staff have been arbitrarily detained or attacked on numerous occasions.

On 8 October 2018 Oyub Titiev was awarded the Václav Havel Human Right Prize by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in recognition for his work.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English and Russian.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 March 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Oyub Titiev (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/9507/2018/en/>