

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE APPEALS PAROLE DENIAL

On 22 October, the Dmitrovgrad town court, in Russia's Ulyanovsk region, rejected the parole application of 21-year-old human rights defender Yan Sidorov. Yan Sidorov and his friend Vladislav Mordasov are prisoners of conscience, serving sentences of four years for trying to organise a peaceful protest in November 2017 in support of dozens of Rostov-on-Don residents who had lost their houses in mass fires. Yan Sidorov is appealing the decision.

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

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Dear Colonel Ryabkov,

I am writing to you concerning human rights defender **Yan Sidorov** who is serving his sentence at IK-10. On 22 October, the Dmitrovgrad Town Court rejected his parole application. His defence team has appealed this decision.

Yan Sidorov and his friend Vladislav Mordasov were arrested on 5 November 2017 for trying to organise a peaceful protest in support of dozens of Rostov-on-Don residents who had lost their houses in mass fires. They were 18 and 21 years old respectively at the time. They were falsely charged with "organizing mass disturbances" and following an unfair trial, on 4 October 2019 they were sentenced, Yan Sidorov to six years and six months and Vladislav Mordasov to six years and seven months in strict regime penal colony. On 10 December, the Third Court of Appeal in Rostov-on-Don upheld their convictions. In July 2020 each of their sentences were reduced to four years.

Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov committed no crime and are prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and intending to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. They should be released immediately and unconditionally, and their convictions should be quashed.

As the head of the Federal Penitentiary Service for the Ulyanovsk Region, I urge you to use your authority to support Yan Sidorov's appeal for parole.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a series of mass fires in Rostov-on-Don in July and August 2017, more than 160 houses were destroyed, one person died, and dozens suffered injuries. Around 700 people were officially recognised as victims. While some compensation for the loss of property has been paid, the authorities did not allow people to build new houses on the same plots of land and did not pay compensation for the loss of their land, which in turn prompted rumours that the fire may have been started deliberately to evict the residents and clear the site for new developments.

On 5 November 2017, 18-year-old college student Yan Sidorov and 21-year-old Vladislav Mordasov came to the square in front of the Rostov-on-Don Region administration to hold a peaceful picket in support of the victims of Rostov fires. They had several printed leaflets, a loudspeaker and two rolled up handwritten posters that they had made the day before. The posters read: "Return the land to victims of Rostov fires" and "The government should resign". Even before they could start the picket, police arrested them for holding an "unlawful gathering". On the same day, police arrested 18-year-old Viacheslav Shashmin outside a block of flats close by. Viacheslav Shashmin claims that he did not know Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov at the time and did not participate in their picket.

On 6 November 2017, Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov were sentenced in separate proceedings to seven days of "administrative detention" each under Article 20.2, part 2, of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences ("Organization or conduct of a public event without proper notification of the authorities of this event"). Both were then remanded in custody as criminal suspects. Viacheslav Shashmin was given five days of "administrative detention" on spurious charges of "petty hooliganism" under Article 20.1 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences. He was later placed under house arrest, and then under travel restrictions. While in police custody, Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov were reportedly subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in an attempt to extract "confessions" that they were going to organize a violent demonstration.

On 17 November 2017, Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov were falsely charged with the crimes of "attempting to organize mass disturbances" (Article 30, part 3, Article 212, part 1, of the Russian Criminal Code) and "attempting to participate in mass disturbances" (Article 30, part 3, Article 212, part 2, of the Russian Criminal Code). Viacheslav Shashmin was charged with "attempting to participate in mass disturbances".

The trial of the three young men started in Rostov-on-Don regional court on 29 May 2019. During the trial, at least a third of the prosecution's witnesses refused to confirm their earlier testimonies given during the pre-trial investigation and stated that they had given them under pressure from the investigators. The charges were manifestly false, and the trial of the three men was unfair.

On 4 October 2019, Rostov-on-Don Regional Court found Yan Sidorov and Vladislav Mordasov guilty of "organizing" and Viacheslav Shashmin of participating in "mass disturbances" on 5 November 2017. The Court sentenced Yan Sidorov to six years and six months and Vladislav Mordasov to six years and seven months in a strict regime penal colony (a type of penal colony reserved for those convicted of most serious crimes). Viacheslav Shashmin was handed a three-year suspended (non-custodial) sentence. On 10 December 2019, the Third Court of Appeal in Rostov-on-Don upheld Yan Sidorov's and Vladislav Mordasov's convictions.

On 23 July 2020, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in cassation reduced the prison sentence of both young activists to four years in prison. It paved the way for them to apply for parole. In Yan Sidorov's case, his parole application was rejected by the Dimitrovgrad City Court on 22 October 2020. Vladislav Mordasov's appeal is yet to be considered, the appeal court hearings have been postponed several times.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 18 January 2021

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Yan Sidorov (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/3216/2020/en/>