



## EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

### **The Conviction of Oyub Titiev Is a Blatant Violation of the Rule of Law: Human Rights Defenders in the North Caucasus Should Continue Their Work**

#### **Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum explicitly condemns yesterday's verdict of the Shali City Court in the Chechen Republic<sup>1</sup>, which sentenced **Oyub Titiev**, Director of the Regional Branch of the Human Rights Centre "Memorial" in Grozny, to four years in a penal colony settlement.

This verdict is a blatant violation of the rule of law. As mentioned in statements and appeals by the Board and other Forum entities<sup>2</sup>, multiple addresses of prominent civil society organisations and international institutions worldwide<sup>3</sup>, the investigation did not have any plausible ground from the very beginning to the end.

On 9 January 2018, Mr Titiev was arrested on charges of illegal possession of a reportedly large amount of marijuana, and since then he had been held in pre-trial detention. On 11 March 2019, the day of oral statements of the parties and Oyub's allocution, and 18 March 2019, the day of the pronouncement of the verdict, many Russian and international human rights defenders, journalists and diplomats could see with their own eyes the absurdity of the process. The prosecutor needed just 20 minutes to summarise the case, whose investigation took over 14 months, whilst the legal defence mentioned at least 40 proofs, which should have been excluded from the case on the basis of violations of procedures<sup>4</sup>.

'The presence of international observers at the trial of Oyub Titiev was a powerful assertion of international solidarity with Oyub and an important statement of the absolute requirement for observance of international standards of fair trial,' said **Simon Cosgrove**, Head of the NGO "Rights in Russia" (Ilminster, UK), who went on a court hearing mission on 11 March with the mandate of the Forum's Solidarity Group.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://meduza.io/en/news/2019/03/18/chechen-human-rights-icon-oyub-titiev-sentenced-to-four-years-for-controversial-drug-possession-conviction>

<sup>2</sup> See the Letter to the Russian government from 18 May 2018 ([https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/AppealOyubTitiev18.05.2018\\_en.pdf](https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/AppealOyubTitiev18.05.2018_en.pdf)) and the Statement from 11 October 2018 (<https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementOyubTitiev11.10.2018.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> See, eg, the cronicle of the case at [www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/oyub-titiev-detained-and-facing-criminal-investigation](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/oyub-titiev-detained-and-facing-criminal-investigation)

<sup>4</sup> See [www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2019/03/11/149898-oyub-titiev-vystupil-v-sude-s-poslednim-slovom-prigovor-oglasyat-18-marta](http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2019/03/11/149898-oyub-titiev-vystupil-v-sude-s-poslednim-slovom-prigovor-oglasyat-18-marta)

‘By organising criminal prosecution and judicial reprisals against Oyub Titiyev, the Chechen authorities set a goal to completely destroy any opportunity for the activities of human rights defenders in the republic,’ added **Yuri Dzhiblادze**, President at the Centre for Development of Democracy and Human Rights (Moscow, Russia), Coordinator of the Forum’s Advocacy Group, another participant of the solidarity mission on behalf of the Forum. ‘However, by his behaviour at the trial, Oyub shows that he does not give up and they have not broken his spirit. It gives hope that his human rights work will not pass in vain and other people will come forward, just as he came forward one day when Natalia Estemirova was killed ten years ago.’

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum reiterates its support for Oyub Titiev and all those, who were wrongfully convicted in the Chechen Republic and the North Caucasus, and demands the revocation of all charges against Oyub and his immediate release. We also address all human rights organisations worldwide, national governments, international and inter-governmental institutions and media outlets to pursue following up this particular case and document further violations in the region. The work of civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the Chechen Republic and the entire North Caucasus should be continued.

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**The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum** was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 167 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members or supporters of the Forum. It aims at development of cooperation of civil society organisations from Russia and EU and greater participation of NGOs in the EU-Russia dialogue. The Forum has been actively involved, inter alia, in the questions of facilitation of visa regime, development of civic participation, protection of the environment and human rights, dealing with history and civic education.

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