



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Solidarity with Magomed Mutsolgov: Stop the Pressure on the Prominent Ingush Human Rights Defender

Statement by the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum is extremely concerned by reports of a raid conducted at the office of the NGO MASHR, Forum's member, in Karabulak, Ingushetia, and in the home of its leader Magomed Mutsolgov, Head of the Ingush Public Monitoring Committee and a prominent human rights defender.

As reported by Mutsolgov, mass media, and non-governmental organisations, in the early morning of 6 November 2015, a few dozen armed men, some of them masked, came in three armored "Gazelle" vans and two passenger cars to the MASHR office and Mutsolgov's house located nearby. Saying that they were police officers, the men sealed off the area around the house and the office and spent a few hours searching the premises and confiscating the computers and all of the organisations's documents and archives dating back to its establishment. The conduct of this large group of armed men was clearly intimidating; Magomed's children were terrified and his mother had a heart attack.

We are particularly concerned about the text of the order warranting the search as part of the 'operational investigation and search activities', signed by the Acting Chair of the Supreme Court of Ingushetia. This document says that Magomed Mutsolgov allegedly 'serves as liaison for anti-Russian NGOs located in Georgia, United States, and Europe, and acts on behalf and orders of foreign NGOs' and that he, 'while pursuing subversive purposes in Russia, has taken steps aimed at inciting religious conflict' and is involved in 'various extremist projects', 'which spread anti-Russian information and propaganda to shape destructive public opinions about the Russian government's actions in regard of Ukraine, Georgia, and Syria.' The document further states that 'for subversive purposes, he uses various online media and social networks. In addition, Mutsolgov had organised various seminars, workshops, and forums.' The document also states that Mutsolgov allegedly 'acts in a very secretive manner, trying to conceal his involvement in extremism. He only uses proven channels and proxies. He manufactures and stores various extremist materials aimed at inciting ethnic hatred in society, and also other items prohibited for free circulation in Russia.'

It is hard to believe that a judge has written these words today in 2015 and not at the time of Soviet repression. This document stylistically reminds of a different historical era and is ridiculous in its content; what is more, it directly contradicts the law. While Mutsolgov is neither a suspect nor a witness in any criminal proceedings, the wording of the said document gives us grave concerns over potentially serious consequences.

The absurdity of accusations against Mutsolgov is clear to anyone who knows Magomed and his work, including his contribution to this Forum. Magomed Mutsolgov is a well-known expert in Russia and internationally and is an authoritative and respected human rights defender. His sincerity, honesty, and patriotism cannot be questioned. For many years, Magomed and his organisation have provided legal assistance to victims of human rights violations in the North Caucasus, including IDPs, victims of arbitrary

