



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

### **The Abduction and Mock Execution of Oleg Kozlovsky Is Yet Another Blatant Case of Violation against Human Rights Defenders in the North Caucasus**

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

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum is shocked by the abduction and mock execution of our colleague Oleg Kozlovsky, a researcher at Amnesty International and Director of the Vision of Tomorrow Foundation, a Forum member organisation. We call for the due investigation of the crime and demand to bring perpetrators to justice.

On 5 October 2018, Oleg Kozlovsky was sent by Amnesty International to Magas, the capital of the Republic of Ingushetia, in the Russian North Caucasus to observe demonstrations against exchange of the lands between Ingushetia and the neighbouring Chechen Republic<sup>1</sup>.

As Oleg himself reported on his Facebook page<sup>2</sup>, on the night of 6 October, an unknown man informed him that one of the protest organisers would like to meet him. When Oleg followed the man, he was lured into a car and driven to a location outside the city, where he was stripped and beaten, which caused a fractured rib. Two abductors, who presented themselves as officers of the Centre for Combatting Extremism but refused to show their identification documents, threatened Oleg with a handover to the Chechen authorities, an immediate execution and death to his wife and children, should he not agree to cooperate with them. Finally, upon promising not to make the incident public, he was released and brought to the Vladikavkaz Airport in the neighbouring Republic of North Ossetia – Alania. On 7 October, Oleg came back to Moscow and was advised to leave Russia for an uncertain period of time.

The abduction and torture of Oleg Kozlovsky is not the first case, when the work of civil society actors has been impeded with violence, and adds to the systemic violation of fundamental freedoms and rights in the North Caucasus and Russia as a whole. Attacks on human rights defenders and

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<sup>1</sup> See more at [www.dw.com/en/protests-in-ingushetia-alarm-moscow/a-45870230](http://www.dw.com/en/protests-in-ingushetia-alarm-moscow/a-45870230)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.facebook.com/kozlovsky](https://www.facebook.com/kozlovsky) and the official statement by Amnesty International at [www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/10/russia-amnesty-researcher-abducted-and-subjected-to-mock-executions-in-ingushetia](http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/10/russia-amnesty-researcher-abducted-and-subjected-to-mock-executions-in-ingushetia)

international journalists<sup>3</sup>, as well as environmental activists<sup>4</sup>, detention of Oyub Titiev, Head of the Human Rights Centre “Memorial” in the Chechen Republic<sup>5</sup>, are just a few of such numerous blatant cases.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, already addressed by Oleg Kozlovsky, as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, to immediately investigate the abduction and torture of our colleague, bring the perpetrators to justice and provide security guarantees for Oleg and his family members. Furthermore, we demand that authorities ensure safe and favourable conditions for the work of human rights defenders in the North Caucasus and that no hate speech or actions against civil society activists are tolerated and left without punishment.

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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, 153 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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<sup>3</sup> See the statement by the Forum Steering Committee of 10 March 2016 at <https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementCommitteePreventionTorture10.03.2016.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See, eg, the statements by Forum bodies of 9 January 2018 at <https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementRudomakha09.01.2018.pdf> and of 4 October 2016 at <https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementViolentAttacks04.10.2016.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See a letter and a statement by the Forum Board of 18 May 2018 at [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 of 11 October 2018 at <https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementOyubTitiev11.10.2018.pdf>