



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Oyub Titiev Awarded a Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Has Been on a Semi-Closed Trial in Chechnya

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

On 8 October 2018, Oyub Titiev, Director of the Regional Branch of the Human Rights Centre “Memorial” in Grozny (Chechen Republic), was announced the winner of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize¹. The prize is awarded by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in partnership with the Václav Havel Library² and the Charta 77 Foundation and honours civil society actions in the defence of human rights within Europe and beyond³.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum appreciates the efforts of the Council of Europe to bring international attention to the case of Oyub Titiev. The decision came just on time, as his semi-closed trial has been taking place in the Chechen Republic.

Oyub Titiev is a well-respected human rights defender in the North Caucasus, throughout Russia and in the international community. He has been Head of the Grozny Office of the Human Rights Centre “Memorial”, since his colleague Natalia Estemirova was murdered in 2009.

On 9 January 2018, Mr Titiev was detained on charges of the illegal possession of a reportedly large amount of marijuana, and since then he has been held in a pre-trial detention. The regional office of Memorial in Grozny has remained closed⁴. The trial itself has been carried out in the Shali City Court⁵ in a semi-closed format: The testimonies of the prosecuting witnesses were unavailable to the public. All this confirms our conviction that Mr Titiev was arrested in retaliation for his human rights work, without any plausible proof of his guilt. We consider his trial unfair and based on false accusations.

¹ See more at http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/apce/vaclav-havel-human-rights-prize

² See more at <http://www.vaclavhavel-library.org/en/vh-prize>

³ See more at <http://website-pace.net/documents/10643/2019145/VHP-regulation-2016-en.pdf/139aede3-ddd5-4762-8191-46df2ee9eda1>

⁴ See more at <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/326379/> [in Russian]

⁵ See more at <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/oyub-titiev-detained-and-facing-criminal-investigation>

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum reiterates⁶ its demands to immediately release Oyub Titiev and drop all charges against him, as well as urges the Russian authorities to comply with the international obligations of the country, to respect and to enable the secure work of human rights defenders.

We call on international organisations and officials, such as MEPs and members of national parliaments and governments, European Commission officials, representatives of diplomatic missions in Russia, to follow the PACE example, to observe the situation with human rights violations in the Russian Federation and to demand the release of Mr Titiev.

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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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⁶ See also the Appeal of the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum to the Government of the Russian Federation of 18 May 2018 at https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/AppealOyubTitiev18.05.2018_en.pdf