

Stop the persecution of human rights lawyers in occupied Crimea!

The violent attack against lawyers carrying out their professional duties and defending rights of Ukrainian citizens in the occupied peninsula has been expanding during last two days.

On 25 January, lawyer **Nikolai Polozov** was detained by FSB officers in Simferopol. It happened immediately after his arrival from the PACE session where he was reporting the facts of political persecution in Crimea. The FSB officers detained him for interrogation in the criminal case against **Ilmi Umerov**. Since Mr Polozov represents Mr Umerov in this case, he cannot provide witness testimony. Eventually, Mr Polozov was released in 2 and a half hours.

The next day morning, January the 26th, it became known about the abduction of lawyers **Edem Semedlyayev** and **Emil Kurbedinov** by representatives of the 'Center for Combatting Extremism' ('Center E') of the Ministry of internal affairs of the Russian Federation. The lawyers were heading to Bakhchysarai in order to provide legal assistance to the family of a civic activist, Mr Saliev, whose house was being searched since the early morning of that day. The lawyers' car was stopped by traffic police ('DPS') referring to 'a database check'. Subsequently, officials of "Center E" arrived and declared the 'administrative detention' of Emil Kurbedinov.

Emil Kurbedinov was brought to and detained in the premises of the 'Center for Combatting Extremism' ('Center E') in Simferopol. Later, he was taken to the 'Zaliznychnii district court of Simferopol' for an administrative case trial. According to the Kurbedinov's legal representative, Dzhemil Temishev, Emil is being 'charged' with the distribution of 'extremist materials'. Meanwhile, Russian law enforcement officers carried out unlawful searches in the legal offices of **Mr Kurbedinov** and **Mr Semedlyayev** and seized all their equipment, including all the storage devices and documents that are subject to legal advice privilege.

We are firmly [convinced](#) that such actions of the Russian security services are the response to their intense activities as human rights lawyers.

The human rights organizations express their strong condemnation of unlawful actions of the representatives of the occupation authorities in Crimea and demand the urgent and unconditional release of Mr Kurbedinov. Human rights defenders emphasize the international guarantees of legal profession and demand to ensure compliance with such guarantees as to all lawyers, who defend victims of human rights violations and politically prosecuted on Crimean peninsula.

By persecuting **Nikolai Polozov** and **Emil Kurbedinov**—a very few human rights lawyers operating in Crimea—the occupation authorities not only put pressure on the lawyers and obstruct their conduct, but also deprive the Crimeans of the little chance to defend their rights.

FOR THE ABOVE REASONS, WE DEMAND TO TAKE ALL THE POSSIBLE URGENT MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE REPRESSIONS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYERS IN CRIMEA

- **The President and the Government of Ukraine**, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories, are to make public statements demanding the urgent release of Emil Kurbedinov, a ukrainian lawyer abducted in the territory of Ukraine and termination of political persecution of other ukrainians and further violations of their rights in the territory of Crimea.
- **International non-governmental organizations**, namely Amnesty International, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Front Line Defenders are to make public statements about inadmissibility of prosecuting lawyers and human rights defenders, and also to address international stakeholders and responsible officials with a request of appropriate reaction.
- **International intergovernmental organizations**, namely Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, EU are to denounce actions of the Russian Federation in Crimea concerning the prosecution of lawyers, and also apply personal sanctions to persons involved in such persecutions.

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Tetyana Pechonchyk, Human Rights Information Centre

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