

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST UNLAWFULLY DETAINED

**Aleksei Sokolov, a male human rights defender, is unlawfully detained in the city of Yekaterinburg, near the Ural Mountains in Russia. The court order to keep him in pre-trial detention expired on 6 November and no further order has been issued. Amnesty International is concerned that the treatment of Aleksei Sokolov is aimed at putting him under pressure to withdraw from his human rights work. He remains at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.**

**Aleksei Sokolov** has been in custody since 13 May, when he was detained on suspicion of robbery. When the Sverdlovsk Regional Court ruled on 31 July that he should be released pending trial, the police charged him with theft and he remained in custody. His pre-trial detention has been extended several times by the Leninskii district court in Yekaterinburg. On 20 October, a judge in the same court ordered that he be detained until 6 November. On 2 November, another judge ruled that Aleksei Sokolov's case should be transferred to a different district court and upheld a previous order to detain Aleksei Sokolov until 6 November. The judge did not indicate whether the detention should continue after that date. Despite this, Aleksei Sokolov remains in detention in violation of Russian law. The decision on 2 November was made without a defence lawyer being present, which is an additional violation of Russian law. Aleksei Sokolov is still held in a pre-trial detention centre in Yekaterinburg without knowing how long he might be kept there. A further hearing about the lawfulness of his detention will take place on 25 November.

Since Aleksei Sokolov was detained in May, Amnesty International has noted a number of violations of Russian criminal procedural law in this case, including the public being excluded from a hearing and the judge failing to provide sufficient explanation for an extension of his detention. This leads to concerns that he may not receive a fair trial.

Aleksei Sokolov told his lawyer that police had threatened him soon after he was detained in May that they "could not beat him but would know how to torture him". Aleksei Sokolov also told his lawyer that police said, "You thought you could control us, nobody can control the police. You've got what you deserved as a human rights defender."

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian, English or your own language:

- √ Urging the authorities to release Aleksei Sokolov to await trial, in line with the Supreme Court ruling of 29 October 2009;
- √ Demanding that they grant Aleksei Sokolov a prompt and fair trial;
- √ While he is in custody, urging the authorities to ensure that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- √ Calling on them to demonstrate respect for the lawful work of human rights defenders, and ensure they are free to pursue their lawful activities without fear of repercussions.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 05 JANUARY 2010 TO:

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yurii Ya. Chaika  
Ul. Bolshaia Dmitrovka, 15a  
Moscow GSP-3  
125993 Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 495 692 17 25

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Prosecutor of the Sverdlovsk Region

Yurii A. Ponomarev  
Ul. Moskovskaia, 21  
Yekaterinburg  
GSP 1036 Sverdlovsk Region  
620219 Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 343 377 02 41

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Ombudsperson of the Russian Federation

Vladimir P. Lukin  
Ul. Miasnitskaia, 47  
Moscow  
107048 Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 495 607 74 70

**And copies to: diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 128/09 (EUR 46/011/2009). Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/011/2009](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/011/2009) and [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/020/2009](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/020/2009)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Aleksei Sokolov is the head of the non-governmental organization Pravovaia Osnova (Legal Basis), which campaigns against torture and other ill-treatment of people held in Russia's prisons and detention centres.

In 2006 Aleksei Sokolov distributed a film about torture and other ill-treatment in prison colony IK-2 in Yekaterinburg. Part of the prison colony had been used as a temporary holding centre for people under arrest, and here, according to the film, people were tortured. The film received wide coverage, both in Russia and internationally, and led to the closure of the temporary holding centre. The work of Legal Basis brought about several investigations into police and prison colony staff, accused of crimes including the use of torture to force suspects to confess.

On 13 May 2009 Aleksei Sokolov was detained on suspicion that he had taken part in a 2004 robbery. The investigation into this robbery had been closed several times because of failure to identify a suspect. On 23 April 2009 the investigation was reopened yet again: according to police, one suspect, already in prison for another crime, had confessed to committing the robbery together with Aleksei Sokolov.

According to a decision of 29 October 2009 of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, judges should issue orders of detention during investigation only in exceptional cases and only after considering other measures of restraint in order to ensure that the suspect of a crime does not continue to commit crimes or goes into hiding.

Aleksei Sokolov has a wife and a small children, is officially registered in Yekaterinburg. In one decision, justifying his detention, the judge argued that Aleksei Sokolov could use his position as a member of the public commission for the control of places of detention in order to influence those witnesses in his case, who are already imprisoned. Aleksei Sokolov's membership of the public commission has been suspended while he is under investigation and he would have no access to detainees.

Further information on UA: 128/09 Index: EUR 46/027/2009 Issue Date: 24 November 2009

