

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

RUS 001 / 0211 / OBS 026
Administrative harassment
Russian Federation
February 25, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in the **Russian Federation**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the administrative harassment against Mrs. **Evgenia Chirikova**, leader of the Campaign for the Defence of the Khimki Forest in the Moscow region¹.

According to the information received, on February 21, 2011, employees of the Russian Child Protection Service came to the house of Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova in order to proceed to an inspection. She did not open the door.

The employees of the service told her by phone the next day that their visit was allegedly in the follow-up to a letter, signed from her neighbours, accusing Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova of hitting and mistreating her two 4 and 9 years-old daughters. However, the neighbours denied having written the letter. Since the incident, Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova has not been taking her children to school anymore, for fear that they would be taken away by the Child Protection Service.

The Observatory also deplores that previously, on February 1, 2011, Mrs. **Alla Chernysheva**, active member of the same campaign, was detained in the town of Khimki, for allegedly holding a fake bomb to a protest rally on the same day. This pretext legitimated the dispersion of the rally by the authorities. She was released 6 hours later.

The Observatory recalls that Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova already faced judicial harassment and was condemned on August 4, 2010 for "holding an unsanctioned rally" and "resisting the police"². Moreover, throughout the past year, other environmental activists have been threatened and journalists covering the Khimki project have been brutally beaten.

The Observatory condemns the administrative harassment against Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova through the use of the Russian Child Protection Service, as well as the ongoing judicial harassment and threats faced by the environmental activists, which seem to merely aim at silencing their work and hindering their human rights activities.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Russian Federation, urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mrs. Evgenia Chirikova and Mrs. Alla Chernysheva as well as of all activists of the Campaign for the Defence of the Khimki Forest and all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation;

¹ The Campaign for the Defence of the Khimki Forest opposes plans, since 2006, to build a highway to connect Moscow to St. Petersburg through Khimki that would pass through the forest. Local residents opposed the project arguing that it is a protected part of the Moscow's "green belt" designed to counterbalance the city's pollution and to protect wildlife. As plans have continued forward, the activists set up a camp in the forest itself.

² See Urgent Appeal of the Observatory RUS 002 / 0810 / OBS 099

ii. Put an end to any act of harassment - including at the administrative and judicial level - against Ms. Evgenia Chirikova and Mrs. Alla Chernysheva as well as against all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation, and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance and fear of reprisals;

iii. Comply with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, especially

- its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
- its Article 6 (b) and (c) which states that “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, as provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”;
- its Article 8 which provides that “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to have effective access, on a non-discriminatory basis, to participation in the government of his or her country and in the conduct of public affairs. This includes, *inter alia*, the right, individually and in association with others, to submit to governmental bodies and agencies and organizations concerned with public affairs criticism and proposals for improving their functioning and to draw attention to any aspect of their work that may hinder or impede the promotion, protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- and its Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;

iv. Comply with the provisions of the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the protection of human rights defenders and the promotion of their activities, and in particular With Article 2.i), in which the Committee calls on member States to “create an environment conducive to the work of human rights defenders, enabling individuals, groups and associations to freely carry out activities, on a legal basis, consistent with international standards, to promote and strive for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms without any restrictions other than those authorised by the European Convention on Human Rights;;

v. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by the Russian Federation.

Addresses:

- Mr. Dmitri Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation, Ilinka Str, 23, Moscow, 103132, Moscow, Russian Federation, Faxes:+ 7 495 606 5173 / 630 2408
- Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Rashid Nurgaliev, ul. Zhitnaya, 16, 117049 Moscow, Russian Federation, Telegram: Rossiia, 117049, Moskva, Fax: + 7 495 637 49 25
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl, 32/34, 121200 Moscow, Russian Federation, Telegram: Fax:+ 7 495 644 2203
- Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations in Geneva Av. de la Paix 15, CH-1211, Geneva 20, Switzerland, e-mail : mission.russian@ties.itu.int, Fax: +4122 734 40 44

- Embassy of the Russian Federation in Brussels, 31-33 boulevard du Régent, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 513 76 49.

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of the Russian Federation in your respective country.

Paris-Geneva, February 25, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

- E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org
- Tel and fax FIDH + 33 (0) 1 43 55 20 11 / +33 1 43 55 18 80
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