

21 September 2021

## **Russia: Human rights defender and chairperson of the Committee against Torture Igor Kalyapin charged**

On September 17, 2021, the Soviet District Court of the City of Nizhnii Novgorod charged human rights defender **Igor Kalyapin** with "participation in the activities of an undesirable organization" under Article 20.33 of the Code of Civic Conduct of the Russian Federation and fined the human rights defender 10,000 Russian Roubles. Igor Kalyapin and his lawyers will appeal this decision.

[Igor Kalyapin](#) is a human rights defender and the chairperson of the Committee Against Torture (CAT). He is also the founder and President of the [Joint Mobile Group \(JMG\)](#), which was established by several human rights organisations in November 2009 following the murder of woman human rights defender [Natalia Estemirova](#) in Chechnya. The JMG received the Front Line Defenders Award in April 2011 for their work in investigating torture and disappearances in Chechnya and was also the 2013 recipient of the Martin Ennals Award. Igor Kalyapin is also a member of the Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights in Russia. The human rights defender and his CAT colleagues have been subjected to [defamation campaigns](#), [physical attacks](#), [detentions](#), and [judicial persecution](#) because of their peaceful human rights work.

The prosecutor initiated civil proceedings against the human rights defender on 9 July 2021, based on an accusation from a local citizen. On 17 September 2021, the Court charged and fined Igor Kalyapin in relation to his interaction as a member of the CAT with the Czech organization People in Need (Člověk v tísni o.p.s.) The evidence was based on a series of publications on the CAT's website between 2015 and 2017 that mentioned the work of the organisation People in Need. One of the publications included a news piece about when the CAT was awarded People in Need's Homo Homini award in 2016, another of the publications concerned CAT's short film "286", produced in 2015, that took part in a special event organised by People in Need in Prague.

The Czech non-governmental organisation People in Need was established in 1992 and provides aid in troubled regions and supports adherence to human rights worldwide. In 2019, following the decision of the Head Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Justice included People in Need on the list of "undesirable organizations". Russia's law on "undesirable organizations," among other things, prohibits Russian citizens from any interaction with such entities, as they allegedly pose a threat to the constitutional order of the country, the country's defense, and state security (Federal Law 272-FZ). Since this law was introduced, the State has been using it to prohibit the work of foreign and local civil society organizations in Russia.

Despite the fact that all the publications in question were uploaded on the CAT website before the Ministry of Justice included People in Need in the list of "undesirable organizations", the Court sustained the prosecutor's accusations and found Igor Kalyapin guilty of participation in the activities of an "undesirable organization".

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the targeting of human rights defender Igor Kalyapin as it appears to be directly related to his peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders expresses concern about the continued use of repressive laws against human rights defenders and civil society organisations in Russia and calls upon the Russian Federation to abolish the "undesirable organizations" law.

**Front Line Defenders urges the relevant authorities in the Russian Federation to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges and quash the fine issued to human rights defender Igor Kalyapin as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been charged solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

**Front Line Defenders Board of Directors**

Denis O'Brien, Jim Conway, Maria Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe), Verónica Vidal (Uruguay)

**Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council**

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Mary Lawlor

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: Second Floor, Grattan House, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20204494; CHY 22404