

3 February 2022

Russia: Defamation campaign against human rights defender Igor Kalyapin

On 29 January 2022, unknown individuals placed offensive posters on the door of the apartment where human rights defender **Igor Kalyapin** is registered, in Nizhny Novgorod. One of the posters displayed "Igor Kalyapin defends terrorists! Shame on foreign agent!", while the other one stated "Igor Kalaypin is a foreign agent! Sold the Motherland for German and American grants!". The human rights defender reported that the person inhabiting the apartment is his 84-year-old mother.

[Igor Kalyapin](#) is a human rights defender, founder and former chairperson of the Committee Against Torture (CAT). He is also the founder and President of the Joint Mobile Group (JMG), which several human rights organizations established 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 he was also the 2013 recipient of the Martin Ennals Award. Igor Kalyapin is also a member of Russia's Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights.

The Committee against Torture's public campaign calling for the immediate release of Zarema Musaeva, the mother of human rights defender [Abubakar Yangulbayev](#), caused outrage among Chechen pro-governmental media outlets. The smear campaign against Igor Kalyapin is related to CAT's intensive work following the recent [abduction](#) of Zarema Musaeva by Chechen law enforcement officers.

On 20 January 2022, Chechen law enforcement abducted the mother of human rights defender Abubakar Yangulbayev, Zarema Musaeva, and attacked human rights defenders and lawyers Sergey Babinets and Oleg Khabibrakhmanov and woman human rights attorney Natalia Dobronravova. On 23 January 2022, the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, [called](#) Igor Kalyapin and Novaya Gazeta's journalist and woman human rights defender Elena Milashina "terrorists" and stated that "terrorist should be eradicated."

This is not the first time that the "foreign agent" rhetoric is being used to intimidate human rights defenders from the Committee Against Torture. In 2012, when the Russian government first introduced the "foreign agent" law, human rights defenders from the Committee against Torture were already targeted with a smear campaign based on the "foreign agent" rhetoric. In 2012, a group of unknown individuals targeted the Committee against Torture's deputy Chairperson, woman human rights defender [Olga Sadovskaya](#), inscribing "foreign agent" on fences next to her house. Numerous human rights organizations and defenders in Russia were targeted with similar smear attacks during that period.

Front Line Defenders reiterates its concerns about Russia's "foreign agents" law and condemns the intimidation and targeting of human rights defenders and considers it an attempt to threaten, silence, and stop their crucial work protecting human rights in the Chechen Republic and other republics of the North Caucasus. Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned by the continued intimidation campaign against human rights defenders from the Committee against Torture working on the case of Zarema Musaeva's.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Russia to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the intimidation campaign against the human rights defender Igor Kalyapin and his family, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction of Zarema Musaeva, mother of human rights defender Abubakar Yangulbayev. with a view to ensuring her protection, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards
3. Cease the practice of using the word "terrorism" against civil society activists, human rights defenders and journalists in reprisal for their legitimate human rights work;
4. Abolish the discriminatory "foreign agents" law; and
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia, including in Russia's Republic of Chechnya, are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with Russia's international human rights obligations and commitments.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 9.1: *"In the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the promotion and protection of human rights as referred to in the present Declaration, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to benefit from an effective remedy and to be protected in the event of the violation of those rights."* and to Article 9.2: *"To this end, everyone whose rights or freedoms are allegedly violated has the right, either in person or through legally authorized representation, to complain to and have that complaint promptly reviewed in a public hearing before an independent, impartial and competent judicial or other authority established by law and to obtain from such an authority a decision, in accordance with law, providing redress, including any compensation due, where there has been a violation of that person's rights or freedoms, as well as enforcement of the eventual decision and award, all without undue delay."*

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director