

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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RUSSIA MUST RELEASE UKRAINIAN FILM DIRECTOR OLEG SENTSOV

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate release of Ukrainian film director, **Oleg Sentsov**. In a note passed through his lawyer, Sentsov declared on 16 May that he, 'a Ukrainian citizen unlawfully convicted by a Russian court and serving [his] sentence in a penal colony in Labytnangi, declare[s] an indefinite hunger strike, as of 14 May 2018.' He says he will end his strike only on the condition that 'all Ukrainian political prisoners' who are currently being held by the Russian Federation are released. Sentsov is serving a 20-year prison sentence following an unfair trial on politically-motivated charges.

Since he began the strike, Oleg Sentsov has been transferred to a separate cell where his health is regularly being monitored by prison medical staff. According to the lawyer, Oleg Sentsov's health is stable and he has no complaints at this point about the penal colony staff's treatment towards him, or the prison conditions. On 31 May, 16 days into the hunger strike, Russian politician, Ksenia Sobchak had a video-call with Oleg Sentsov during which she tried to convince him to end his hunger strike; he refused. Ksenia Sobchak described the film director as looking 'very bad; he [has] lost weight; his cheeks are funnelled; he looks pale, but is very confident in his decision.' On 4 June, Oleg Sentsov's lawyer reported that Oleg Sentsov has lost 8 kilograms since he went on hunger strike and that prison doctors have warned him that if he continues the strike he would be at grave risk of kidney failure and in that event subject to force feeding.

The film director was sentenced on 25 August 2015 to 20 years imprisonment for allegedly setting up a branch of a 'terrorist group' and organizing 'terrorist acts' in April 2014. He maintains his innocence. He was convicted in a military court in the Russian Federation, following a grossly unfair trial, on politically-motivated charges and his conviction was based on "confessions" obtained under torture.

The Russian authorities should respect and protect Oleg Sentsov's right to freedom of expression and ensure that any and all medical treatment provided to Oleg Sentsov is done in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent, and that no unwanted treatment or force feeding is executed which may amount to torture and other ill-treatment.

Oleg Sentsov's co-defendant, **Aleksandr Kolchenko** was also sentenced on 25 August 2015 by a military court in Russia, following a grossly unfair trial, to 10 years in prison for "committing terrorist acts". On 31 May, he went on hunger strike demanding the release of fellow activist, Oleg Sentsov. On 7 June, Kolchenko's lawyer reported that Kolchenko stopped his hunger strike, as a result of feeling too physically weak. Amnesty International continues to call on the authorities to take immediate steps to review Aleksandr Kolchenko's case, overturn his convictions under false or disproportionate terrorism related charges, and either ensure he receives a fair trial before a civilian court, under appropriate charges, or that he is released.

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