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Russia: Close the Khimki Case and Drop All Charges against Gaskarov and Solopov

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Global action day 2.0

November 12-15, Close the Khimki Case and Drop All Charges against Gaskarov and Solopov

November 12-15, 2010: New International Days of Action

We Demand that the Russian Authorities Close the Khimki Case and Drop All Charges against Alexei Gaskarov and Maxim Solopov

In late October 2010, Russian social activists Alexei Gaskarov and Maxim Solopov were released from police custody on their own recognizance by the Khimki Municipal Court. They had been arrested a day after a protest in defense of the Khimki Forest on July 28, 2010. Now they are free pending trial, but the criminal case against them has not been closed. They have been formally charged with disorderly conduct, and if convicted, they could be sentenced to up to seven years in prison. The dates of their trials have not been set, but meanwhile prosecutors are demanding that Alexei and Maxim be returned to police custody. Aside from Alexei and Maxim, there are two other people who have been charged in the case, and prosecutors might bring charges against even more people in the very new future. Since Alexei and Maxim were arrested in late July, police investigators have been stubbornly fabricating arrest protocols, evidence, and eyewitness testimony and using force to extract statements from the hundreds of people they have hunted down and detained. What will happen to all these thick case files filled with fabrications? They will form the basis of the prosecution's case in court. And so the fact that Alexei and Maxim have now been released from jail is not the end of the battle but a signal that we must continue to act decisively on their behalf. We will not allow the authorities to cover up the illegal destruction of the forest and the persecution of its defenders with the soiled robes of counterfeit justice. We will force the authorities to close the Khimki Case and drop charges against all activists!

Why do the Russian authorities insist on turning activists into criminals and demanding prison sentences for them? For the same reason that they have either not launched or halted investigations into the near-fatal beating of journalist Mikhail Beketov, the murder of newspaper worker Sergei Protazanov, and the numerous attacks on Khimki residents. The policemen who beat up environmentalists defending the forest and arrested people participating in legal pickets have not been punished. The police investigators who tortured witnesses in the Khimki Case have not been

punished. Can we expect fair trials for Alexei and Maxim when we have witnessed lawlessness and injustice so many times? Khimki judges have on numerous occasions shown all of us that we cannot count on their respect for the law and common sense. We demand that the case be closed!

The protest action that took place in Khimki on July 28, 2010, was a response to the lawlessness and violence perpetrated against local residents, journalists, and activists. It was a highly emotional response to the fact that all previous protests had not just been ignored by the authorities but had been cruelly suppressed. As a result of this protest, the Russian authorities began heeding the voice of the forest's defenders. The campaign to defend the forest caught this gust of hot July wind and continued to act using other means. The authorities must end their persecution of the people who took part in this protest and the forest defenders. All charges against Alexei Gaskarov, Maxim Solopov, and other activists must be dropped.

What You Can Do

1. During the international days of action on November 12-15, 2010, hold eye-catching protest actions in your cities at official political and cultural events organized by the Russian authorities as well as outside Russian Federation embassies and consulates. Demand to meet with official Russian representatives and give them your petitions. Any Russian company, product or event can be a successful occasion for your protests.
2. Send faxes to the Khimki Municipal Court (+7-495-572-8314), the Moscow Region Prosecutor's Office (+7-495-621-5006) and the President of the Russian Federation (+7-495-606-2464), demanding that the case be closed and all charges against Alexei Gaskarov, Maxim Solopov, and other activists dropped.
3. Continue to send letters to such international organizations as the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and the UN, asking them to investigate the abuses by Russian authorities and intervene in the case. You can find contact information for these organizations [here](#).
4. Work to get articles published in your local and national media that will inform the broader public about the case of the Khimki hostages and the new threats to civil liberties and the rule of law in Russia. Invite neighbors, friends, and colleagues to your solidarity actions in support of Alexei and Maxim, and ask them to join you in demanding that this fabricated criminal case be closed.

Send information about your solidarity actions as well as copies of letters, faxes, and media publications to our e-mail address: info.khimkibattle.org

More information at www.khimkibattle.org