

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON

On 15 July, a court in Krasnodar (southern Russia) sentenced Andrei Pivovarov to four years in prison for “carrying out activities of an undesirable organization”, under a law that contravenes Russia’s international human rights obligations. Andrei Pivovarov is a political activist, human rights defender and the former director of Open Russia, an organisation advocating for democracy and human rights. On 31 May 2021, he was taken off a flight in Saint Petersburg and arbitrarily detained since. Andrei Pivovarov has committed no internationally recognized crime and has been jailed for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association. He is appealing his conviction.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Igor Victorovich Krasnov
Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation
15a Bolshaya Dmitrovka street
Moscow
125993
Russian Federation

Dear Prosecutor General,

*I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the arbitrary prosecution and conviction of activist **Andrei Pivovarov**, who was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment on charges of “carrying out the activities of an undesirable organization” (Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code). He is appealing his conviction. Andrei Pivovarov’s only “crime” was posting information about the peaceful and lawful activities of the Russian non-governmental organisation Open Russia. He was arrested on 31 May 2021 and put in pretrial detention in Krasnodar, a city many kilometres away from his home.*

Andrei Pivovarov is a prominent political activist and human rights defender from Saint Petersburg. He has been involved in the democracy and human rights movement in Russia for more than 15 years and has never used or condoned violence. Exercising one’s rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association is not a crime. They are guaranteed by the Russian Constitution and international law.

In the light of the above, I urge you to drop the criminal charges against Andrei Pivovarov, end his prosecution and immediately and unconditionally release him.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Andrei Pivovarov is a prominent Russian political activist, human rights defender and ex-director of the now banned organisation Open Russia. He has been involved in the work of various pro-democracy and human rights groups in Saint Petersburg since the mid-2000s. Open Russia was formed with the support of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former Russian businessman and prisoner of conscience, now living in the United Kingdom. The organisation supported opposition candidates in local elections and independent journalists, organized peaceful protests, helped individuals prosecuted on political grounds and conducted other similar activities.

On 26 April 2017, the Prosecutor General's office arbitrarily designated two British NGOs with similar names (Otkrytaya Rossia and Open Russia Civic Movement) as "undesirable organizations" under a restrictive law, which makes it an offence in Russia to be involved in any activities associated with organisations labelled as "foreign organisations". Although initially the authorities claimed that this move would not affect Open Russia, which is a domestic, and not foreign entity, they later changed their approach and began persecuting Open Russia's activists. These included Anastasia Shevchenko and Mikhail Iosilevich, who were both recognized by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

In all the reported cases, the very fact of having some sort of connection to Open Russia, or even just sharing its materials, was sufficient to impose fines and, later, penalties under criminal law. There has been no evidence of the use of violence or other internationally recognized crimes committed or planned by Open Russia.

In March 2021, a protocol was drawn up against Andrei Pivovarov under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences (carrying out the activities of an undesirable organization) in connection with the Moscow Congress of Municipal Deputies, which, according to the police, was organized by the "undesirable" Open Russia Civic Movement.

In April 2021, an administrative case under the same article was initiated against Andrei Pivovarov for activities in 2020, when he delivered personal protective equipment to an ambulance station in Saint Petersburg during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authorities said that in doing so, he "acted on behalf of the foreign non-governmental organization Open Russia".

On 27 May 2021, Open Russia announced the cessation of its activities in connection with the upcoming tightening of legislation on "undesirable organizations" and the persecution of its activists. See Amnesty International's reaction here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/05/russia-open-russia-movement-forced-to-dissolve-while-its-members-face-severe-reprisals/>

On 29 May 2021, a criminal case was initiated against Andrei Pivovarov under Article 284 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (carrying out the activities of an undesirable organization).

On 31 May 2021 Andrei Pivovarov was taken off a flight from Saint Petersburg to Warsaw and arbitrarily detained (see more details here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/russia-immediately-release-open-russia-leader-detained-after-being-hauled-off-flight/>). The accusation was based on the information that on 12 August 2020, Andrei Pivovarov, while in Krasnodar, had reposted on Facebook information relating to opposition candidates in the local elections. The authorities claimed that this was an activity of the "undesirable" Open Russia. Andrei Pivovarov was transferred to Krasnodar and has remained in detention there since. His communication with the outside world was severely restricted, and he had been allowed no family visits until the trial started at the end of 2021.

On 11 October 2021, the Investigative Committee updated the charges against Andrei Pivovarov and included thirty of his posts and one repost on Facebook on topics such as the protests in Khabarovsk, criticism of amendments to the Russian Constitution and support for detained protesters.

On 15 July 2022, the Leninsky District Court of Krasnodar sentenced Andrei Pivovarov to four years in a penal colony. His lawyer appealed the verdict.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 23 September 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Andrei Pivovarov (he, him)