Zagreb, 22 July 2024

**Appeal against the verdict against human rights activist Vladislav Arinichev**

**Human rights defender fled from Russia - deprived of liberty in Croatia**

**The Centre for Peace Studies (CPS), in collaboration with a lawyer, has today submitted an appeal to the Municipal Misdemeanor Court in Zagreb against the verdict that resulted in the long-time activist against Putin and human rights defender Vladislav Arinichev spending 15 days in detention. Arinichev protested in Zagreb against the life-threatening actions of the Security and Intelligence Agency.** After being released from prison, Arinichev was again deprived of liberty as Croatia denied his asylum request, **and he has been on a hunger strike for five days in the reception centre for foreigners in Trilj.**

Arinichev was forced to leave his home in Russia due to political persecution, having fought for human rights for years and volunteered at the headquarters of Alexei Navalny, among other activities. He had to flee a country where he was not safe because of his opinions and his dedicated fight for justice. Therefore, he sought asylum in Croatia. However, **his asylum request was denied based on the opinion of the Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA)**, which chose to believe Putin's administration that labelled him a terrorist and extremist due to his activist work. This is despite the [European Court of Human Rights determining](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22fulltext%22:%5B%22ZHUKOVETS%20AND%20OTHERS%20v.%20RUSSIA%22%5D,%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-231755%22%5D%7D) that Russia violated the rights of Arinichev and his fellow activists due to measures taken against them for organising anti-war protests.

Moreover, SOA, in its explanation of why it considers him a security threat, criticised him for continuing his activism in Croatia and for publishing a [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZh1Mz9MkLk) highlighting poor conditions in the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers in Zagreb, managed by the Ministry of the Interior – although, following the publication of that video, the conditions in the reception centre improved thanks to the intervention of various organisations and bodies.

These two reasons were **sufficient for SOA to declare Arinichev a security threat and jeopardise his safety and life, as he was denied international protection based on this opinion**, even though the Ministry of the Interior determined that **Arinichev met the conditions for asylum**. Additionally, he had no opportunity to legally challenge the mentioned opinion of SOA, as was the case for many before [him](https://www.cms.hr/hr/cms-u-medijima/novosti-omer-protiv-drzave).

After witnessing similar situations faced by his compatriots, Arinichev continued to speak out about the injustices he faced in Croatia and the life-threatening and concerning actions of SOA. The latest was a peaceful protest on St. Mark's Square in Zagreb, after which he was detained for wearing a shirt with problematic wording, deprived of liberty, and sentenced to 15 days in jail for insulting Croatian authorities, **ignoring the fact that Arinichev did not intend to insult SOA but to highlight the irregularities in the work of a state body on which his life depends.**

Vladislav Arinichev is a human rights defender who **dared to oppose Vladimir Putin and the Russian government**, advocating for democracy, non-violence, and the building of a better society. **Currently, in Croatia, an EU member state that prides itself on democracy, he is deprived of the liberty to protest and express his opinion.**

Arinichev's social activism should not be considered a threat to national security merely because it bothers those in power, freedom of such action should be supported or at least allowed as a minimum guarantee of democracy and human rights in Croatia.

This case shows that **Plenković's administration either blindly trusts Putin or behaves like Putin's**. While the Government publicly expresses opposition to Putin and concern about his undemocratic policies, the Ministry of the Interior either trusts Putin's administration more than its own eyes or is bothered by activism that exposes the Ministry's shortcomings, and they are trying to suppress it through systemic violence.

We emphasise that it is not the first case where Croatian institutions shamefully blindly trust undemocratic countries that abuse international agreements and warrants. Two years ago, we witnessed the detention of activist and Pussy Riot member Aysoltan Niyazov, based on an Interpol warrant issued by Turkmenistan. Fortunately, Croatian courts understood that extraditing Niyazov would endanger her life, and she was released.

**It is time for our institutions to understand that complying with the demands of undemocratic states means playing with human lives, to revoke the security barrier, and to provide protection to Arinichev.**

**The full statement is available** [**here**](https://www.cms.hr/hr/azil-i-integracijske-politike/borac-za-slobodu-lisen-slobode-u-rusiji-ali-i-u-hrvatskoj)**, and for any media inquiries, please contact Lovorka Šošić at lovorka.sosic@cms.hr or on 091 2400 185.**