

Memorial considers Chechen journalist Zhalaudi Geriev a political prisoner

Drugs were planted on a reporter out of favour with the authorities, after which he was put behind bars

On 5 September 2016 Shalinsky town court in the Chechen Republic sentenced Zhalaudi Geriev, a reporter for Caucasian Knot, a news website, to three years in prison under Article 228, Section 2, of the Russian Criminal Code (illegal possession and transport, without the intention of selling, of a large quantity of narcotics). According to the prosecution, Geriev gathered a wild cannabis plant and kept it in his possession, and on the morning of 16 April 2016 he was detained with a large packet of marijuana at the cemetery of a village in Chechnya, where allegedly he planned to consume it.

However, on the morning of 16 April Zhalaudi had checked in on-line and was traveling to Grozny to board a flight to Moscow. Witnesses stated that armed men dragged him by force from the bus in which he was travelling, struck him on the head and pushed him into a waiting car.

According to Geriev, the men took him to a forest, tied his hands with wire, beat him, partially suffocated him, and threatened that they would shoot him. The journalist was accused of working against the authorities of Chechnya, was asked questions about his work as a journalist and forced to admit that he was in possession of marijuana. In court he withdrew this testimony. Testimonies against the journalist were given only by law enforcement officers, and also by their own 'regular witnesses', one of whom had been twice convicted and charged in a third criminal case, which speaks to his lack of independence from the forces of law and order. At the same time, the court called the evidence of witnesses of the abduction of the reporter unreliable without due justification or investigation.

The news website Caucasian Knot is widely known for its publications about violations of human rights in Chechnya. Memorial Human Rights Centre believes that Zhalaudi Geriev has been targeted for this treatment on account of his professional work as a journalist for Caucasian Knot. The authorities of Chechnya have expressed dissatisfaction with the publications of the news website on numerous occasions.

We consider that Zhalaudi Geriev is a political prisoner and demand his immediate release.

In the run up to the hearing of the appeal against the conviction, we urge that the [petition](#) be signed.

For more information about the case, see [here](#).

Recognition of an individual as a political prisoner, or of a prosecution as politically motivated, does not mean that Memorial Human Rights Centre shares or approves of the individual's views, statements or actions.

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