

Memorial recognizes seven people convicted in two ‘Hizb ut-Tahrir’ cases in Kazan as political prisoners

Azat Khasanov, Ildar Shaikhutdinov and Ilmir Imaev were convicted back in 2014 before the law relating to membership of an organization designated as terrorist was made more severe. The defendants were sentenced to terms in general-regime prison colonies from three years five months to six years six months. Participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir was classified as an offence under Article 282.2 of the Russian Criminal Code: for Khasanov under Section 1 (organization of activity of an extremist organization); for the others under Section 2 (participation in activity of an extremist organization). Khasanov, Shaikhutdinov and Imaev were also convicted under Article 282, Section 2 ('c') (incitement of hatred or hostility as a member of an organized group) of the Russian Criminal Code for what amounted to asserting violations of the rights of Muslims and calls to defend them. The evidence for the charges included articles from the journal *Al-Waie* found on the defendants' computers. However, the investigation failed to prove that the defendants distributed these articles, rather than simply read them.

Airat Shakirov, Rainur Ibatullin, Arslan Salimzyanov and Nail Yunusov were convicted in April 2017 when participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir was qualified as an offence under Article 205.5 (organization of, and participation in, activity of an organization designated as terrorist under Russian law) of the Russian Criminal Code. For organizing a cell of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Russia the Criminal Code provides for a sentence of up to life imprisonment. All four defendants in the case were convicted as organizers, under Article 205.5, Section 1, and were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 16 to 18 years. All except for Yunusov were charged with collecting 'membership dues' of between 200 and 1,000 roubles each month from individuals, an activity classed as an offence under Article 2905.1, Section 1 (promoting terrorist activity, with regard to 'financing terrorism').

We have repeatedly expressed our disagreement with the view of the Supreme Court that has designated Hizb ut-Tahrir a terrorist organization. There is no evidence that this association, which is a political party in the Middle East, is involved in terrorism. In Western Europe and North America the party is not banned (with the exception of Germany, where there is a ban under administrative, but not criminal, law).

The activities of the persons convicted, as literally stated in these and other similar judgements, amounts to meeting for the purposes of reading and discussion of religious literature, and discussion of religious and political issues. There is no reference to acts of terrorism. Despite the fact that Hizb ut-Tahrir does not share the ideas of democracy and human rights in the Western sense, we consider the danger to the public of this ideology, disseminated without violence or incitement to violence, is low and cannot serve as a justification for holding a person in detention.

It is evident that the Hizb ut-Tahrir prosecutions fall among the so-called 'serial' cases: the FSB achieves 'very good results' (dozens of convictions) with minimal effort. The tightening of anti-terrorist legislation and the introduction of Article 205.5 into the Criminal Code creates grounds for conducting a very large number of unfounded prosecutions.

We demand that this 'imitation' of combating terrorism be ended, and that Khasanov, Shaikhutdinov, Imaev, Shakirov, Ibatullin, Salimzyanov and Yunusov be released.

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

For more information about the cases of Khasanov, Shaikhutdinov and Imaev, see [here](#); for more information about the cases of Shakirov, Ibatullin, Salimzyanov and Yunusov, see [here](#).

PayPal – an e-wallet for giving help to all Russian political prisoners helppoliticalprisoners@gmail.com.