

15 Muslims, charged with preparing a terrorist attack on the Kirghiziya Cinema, are political prisoners

Weapons were planted on the defendants and they were charged with preparing an act of terrorism and sentenced to terms of between 11 and 12 years in prison

On 27 November 2013, in an apartment in a Moscow hostel where half a dozen Muslims were living, law enforcement officers burst in and ‘found’ explosives and ammunition. The Main Department for Combating Extremism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that it had uncovered a cell of the Egyptian Islamist organization Takfir wal-Hijra, which has been designated a terrorist organization by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

On 22 April the men were convicted in a trial at Moscow District Military Court.

The assertion in the judgment that the defendants were members of Takfir wal-Hijra is unsubstantiated. No such charges were not brought against them, nor were they considered by the court. Moreover, experts doubt that this organization exists.

It can be seen on the police video of the search, a copy of which is in the possession of Memorial, that the police were not concerned that the persons in question could set off an explosion. They assure the bomb disposal expert that ‘everything had been made safe.’ The bomb disposal experts who conducted a ‘test explosion’ of the materials concluded that it was a fake device (in other words, the substance was not capable of a dangerous explosion).

Neither the investigation nor the trial established the origin of the munitions, nor by whom, how, or when the alleged device was prepared or taken to the apartment, or to whom it in fact belonged.

This gives grounds to suppose that the weapons and munitions were planted, and the case fabricated.

Finally, the judgment handed down did not establish the purpose or motives of those convicted of preparing an ‘explosion using an improvised explosive device in the Kirghiziya Cinema.’ The absence of an intention means that there are no grounds to bring charges under Article 205 of the Russian Criminal Code. In short, no evidence for the preparation of a terrorist act in the Kirghiziya Cinema was heard in court.

The fabrication of criminal cases of terrorism is one of the main reasons for the increase in the number of political prisoners in Russia since 2000. As a rule, the victims of ‘anti-terrorist’ repressive measures are residents of the North Caucasus and Muslims.

Memorial Human Rights Centre considers the following to be political prisoners: Tazhib Makhmudov, Artur Maslakov, Imran, Artur and Anzor Tekilov, Tagir Akhtakhanov, Sergei Cheprasov, Matliub Nasimov, Islam Ramazanov, Aslan Suleimanov, Khoso Esmurzaev, Adam Shavkhalov, Ersmak Saraliev, Nurmagomed Balakadashev and Inyal Balakadashev.

We demand that the conviction be quashed, that there be an impartial review of the case, and that those responsible for the fabrication be brought to justice.

For more information about this 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.