

Memorial considers Andrei Kolomiets, who took part in the Maidan events, a political prisoner

Andrei Kolomiets, a citizen of Ukraine, has been sentenced to ten years in a strict regime penal colony. In Simferopol, the Kiev district court found him guilty of the attempted murder of two Berkut officers (he allegedly threw Molotov cocktails during confrontations on Grushevsky Street in Kiev) and of transporting hashish under Article 30, Section 3, and Article 105, Section 2, Points a, b, e and l (attempted murder of two people in connection with their professional duties committed in a generally dangerous manner on motives of political or ideological hatred) and Article 228, Section 2 (unlawful acquisition, possession, transport not for the purpose of sale, of plants containing narcotic substances or mood-altering drugs, in large amounts) of the Russian Criminal Code.

Kolomiets was detained in May 2015 in the village of Yantarny in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkariya, where he lived with his partner Galina Zalikhanova. He has said that he was tortured with electric shocks and suffocation, after which he gave testimony in which he admitted his guilt, although he retracted his testimony later in court. The transport of narcotics, Kolomiets asserts, was staged days after he was detained.

According to the official version that we believe lacks credibility, Kolomiets drove with the police officers to the Nalchik police station where he voluntarily answered questions about himself. He was released, but spent the night on a bench in the city, and in the morning travelled home on passing cars, collecting on the way the tops of wild cannabis plants. One of these cars, according to the prosecution, was stopped at a traffic police post, and during the inspection the drugs were found in the car.

However, we believe that the criminal prosecution of Kolomiets is unlawful, not so much because of the falsification of evidence of a crime under Article 228, which, unfortunately, is extremely widespread in Russia, but because the interference of Russian law enforcement agencies in events that happened in another country, with the participation of citizens of another country, is impermissible.

This is not the first case of this kind. Memorial has already recognized as political prisoners another participant in the Maidan events, [Aleksandr Kostenko](#), and the defendants in the [‘case of 26 February’](#) in Simferopol.

The alleged victims from among the Berkut officers serving at that time in the Ukrainian police force could only have had Ukrainian citizenship, and according to the Russian Criminal Code ‘crime and liability for a crime are determined by the criminal law in effect at the time the crime was committed.’ Their subsequent acquisition of Russian citizenship does not give Russia the right to investigate the alleged crimes against them that were committed before that time. Allegations of violence against the Berkut officers are under investigation by Ukrainian prosecutors, however the alleged victims Kozlyakov and Gavrilenko have not taken their allegations to them.

In this case, there is no objective evidence of the guilt of Kolomiets nor of the injury caused to the alleged victims (both stated they experience ‘physical pain’), while there is considerable evidence of falsification. Moreover, the investigators and the court have described as ‘attempted murder’ actions that not once during the confrontations in Kiev bring about the death of police officers or their serious injury, and the alleged victims, in their own words, did not even ask a doctor for medical treatment.

Attention must also be drawn to the fantasy of investigators, who allege that Kolomiets belonged to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (banned in the Russian Federation) that was wholly liquidated in 1954.

We consider that the political motive for the prosecution of Kolomiets is linked to the anti-Ukraine campaign conducted in Russian government media since the spring of 2014. This campaign has been supported by statements issued by the highest public officials of the Russian Federation. One of the essential elements of the campaign has been the prosecution of people

who publicly express opinions about the events in Ukraine that differ from the official version, and in particular of people who are citizens of Ukraine.

We consider that the case of Andrei Kolomiets has been fabricated, and we demand his immediate release.

The details of the case can be read on our [website](#).

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