

**Memorial recognizes Yury Kuly, who took part in the ‘Don’t Call Him Dimon’ protest, as a political prisoner**

*The actor has been sentenced to serve time in a prison colony for seizing a police officer by the arm*

Immediately after the unexpectedly large nationwide anti-government protests on 26th March 2017, criminal prosecutions of a number of those who had taken part began. A large group of investigators was set up to work on these cases. There are grounds to believe that one of the aims of these demonstrative actions by the authorities has been to deter potential protesters.

The first Moscow demonstrator to be speedily prosecuted was the theatre and film actor Yury Kuly under Article 318 (Section 1) (using force against a public official) of the Russian Criminal Code. He has been sentenced to 8 months in a low-security prison colony. He has been held in pre-trial detention since 4 April.

Yury Kuly was charged with having seized the arm, near the shoulder, of senior riot police officer Dmitry Gavriutin for the purpose of hindering his lawful action, and in so doing caused him physical pain. However, no injury or bruising of the police officer was recorded. The only evidence for any pain experienced by the riot police officer as a result of the contact with Yury Kuly has been the words of the “victim” himself.

At the same time, the events of 26 March must be assessed from the point of view of lawful resistance by citizens to unlawful actions of police officers. The attempt to pull an unlawfully detained demonstrator from the hands of a police officer, which is what Yury Kuly sought to do, could be considered lawful given an objective consideration of the case.

The people who gathered on Tverskaya Street on 26 March were not aggressive in any way, and there were no grounds to prevent them from expressing their point of view. The possible presence of provocateurs and aggressive individuals cannot be, and must not become, a reason to break up a peaceful demonstration. On the contrary, the police are obliged to defend the right of citizens to express their points of view, ensuring their safety.

“Obstacles put in the way by the authorities throughout the country to the granting of permission for the conduct of the anti-corruption demonstrations violated the law. They clearly exceeded the permitted restrictions in a democratic society on freedom of assembly,” Memorial Human Rights Centre has said in a [statement](#).

A significant number of instances of the use of unjustified force by police during the peaceful anticorruption demonstrations on 26 March, both in Moscow and in other Russian cities, were [recorded](#). In the capital alone, more than 1,000 people were arrested for exercising their constitutional rights to peaceful demonstration. However, law enforcement agencies did not investigate any of these violations, nor did they recognize the participants in the events as victims.

In addition to Kuly, four other individuals who took part in the march of 26 March in Moscow have been prosecuted.

Memorial Human Rights Centre considers that the prosecution of Yury Kuly is politically motivated, and is intended to intimidate those who criticize the authorities.

Memorial has recognized Kuly as a political prisoner and demands his immediate release.

We also demand that public officials guilty of violating the rights and freedoms of those who took part in the protests of 26 March be prosecuted.

*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 the individual’s views, statements or actions.*

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

PayPal – an e-wallet for giving help to all Russian political prisoners [helppoliticalprisoners@gmail.com](mailto:helppoliticalprisoners@gmail.com).