

## **Memorial recognizes former Kostroma police officer Aleksei Nikonorov as a political prisoner**

Aleksei Nikonorov, at the time of his arrest a former police captain and head of the criminal investigative department of the Kostroma police department, has been sentenced to three years seven months in a general regime prison colony and fined 150,000 roubles under Article 272, Section 3 (unlawful access to protected computer information, if the action resulted in the modification or copying of computer information, committed by a group of people by prior agreement), Article 286, Section 1 (exceeding official powers) and Article 290, Section 3 (receipt of a bribe by an official for knowing commission of unlawful acts) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Nikonorov has been held in custody or under house arrest since 28 July 2015.

The deprivation of Nikonorov of his liberty is linked exclusively with the fact that he figured in the criminal case of opposition politician Andrei Pivovarov, who was responsible for checking the signatures gathered by the PARNAS political party. The criminal investigation into 'unlawful access to information' was a part of the campaign directed against the opposition Democratic Coalition and the PARNAS party, which was a member of that Coalition. Regional election commissions refused to register the lists of candidates of this political group at elections to the legislative assemblies of Novosibirsk and Magadan regions, as well as for the municipal elections in the capital cities of the Republic of Udmurtiya and Perm Region, in other words, everywhere where PARNAS put up its candidates in 2015.

The official investigation did not produce any material evidence that the police officer Nikonorov acted out of self-interest or that Pivovarov forced him to commit allegedly unlawful actions 'by persuasion or other means', as stated in the charges brought against Pivovarov. In this connection, we consider the charges brought against Pivovarov of 'giving bribes to a public official' and against Nikonorov, correspondingly, of 'receiving' a bribe to be absurd and unlawful.

The actual circumstances of the case allow it to be stated with confidence that Pivovarov is completely innocent and Nikonorov is guilty only in relation to a violation of Article 286, Section 1, of the Russian Criminal Code, the provisions of which concern a minor crime and do not provide for a prison term as punishment for a person with no criminal record. It is important to note that for unknown reasons in the summer of 2015 the data bases of the Federal Migration Service were not accessible to visitors to the agency's websites. From the point of view of a number of opposition politicians, this was direct sabotage aimed at preventing candidates and electoral associations, who were gathering the signatures required for registration in the elections, from checking the personal data of those voters who gave their signatures with the information contained in these data bases. Once the period of time during which it was possible to gather signatures was over, the data bases of the Federal Migration Service again began to function. Those public officials, who evidently violated the rights of participants in the electoral process, were not held responsible for their actions, unlike Nikonorov.

We demand the immediate release of Aleksei Nikonorov and the review of the criminal case against him.

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.*

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