

***Statement by Memorial Human Rights Centre
on the Prosecution of Ukrainian Citizen R. Sushchenko***

On **25 September 2017** Moscow City Court once again extended the pre-trial detention of *Roman Sushchenko*, a Ukrainian citizen who is France correspondent for the Ukrinform news agency.

30 September 2017 marked one year since Roman Sushchenko was arrested in Moscow. Sushchenko was at that time charged with espionage against the Russian Federation. In an official statement, the FSB described him as a “colonel” and staffer of the Main Administration of the Intelligence Service of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, who had “gathered information constituting state secrets about the operation of the armed forces and the National Guard of the Russian Federation, the leaking of which abroad could harm the defence capability of the state.” As yet, we do not know the exact nature of the charges against Sushchenko, since the circumstances of the case and the essence and detail of the charges laid against the Ukrainian citizen have been classified.

However, firstly, the very hypothesis that the Ukrainian journalist, who lives permanently in France, came to Russia for personal reasons and was immediately detained, gathered information in Russia that constitutes a state secret, is cause for serious doubt.

Secondly, these doubts are strengthened by the fact that, so far as is known, for the year that Sushchenko has been in detention in Russia almost no steps have been taken to investigate his case.

It is highly likely that the case against Sushchenko is politically motivated – especially against the background of the anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign actively conducted by Russian government officials and pro-government media since 2014, and in the context of the numerous unlawful and unjustified criminal prosecutions of Ukrainian citizens in Russia. The completely closed nature of the investigation and of the future trial in the case of Roman Sushchenko give rise to unavoidable doubts as to whether the charges are justified.

Memorial Human Rights Centre considers that only an open trial (with the possible exception of specific hearings, related to classified information which Sushchenko is accused of gathering) might be able to convince Russian society and the international community that the charges are not trumped up, and the prosecution of the Ukrainian journalist is not politically motivated. The rejection of transparent and open justice in this case confirms our worst suspicions.