

## **Memorial recognizes Oksana Sevastidi, convicted for sending a text message, as a political prisoner**

Resident of Sochi, Oksana Sevastidi, has been sentenced to 7 years in a general-regime prison colony under Article 275 (treason) of the Russian Criminal Code for sending a Georgian acquaintance, at his request, two text messages about military hardware she saw on the street not long before the war between Russia and Georgia.

The information Sevastidi passed on was accessible to an unlimited number of people, and she was not aware that it was classified. We consider it impermissible to hold civilians responsible for the secrecy of military operations, and, what is more, to criminalize communications with foreigners about what is seen on the street. If such a practice becomes the norm, this will have catastrophic consequences for human rights in Russia.

Earlier, in an analogous case, Ekaterina Kharebava, a citizen of Georgia living in Sochi, was given a seven-year prison sentence. Memorial [recognized](#) her as a political prisoner. In the summer of 2016 Ekaterina was released as part of an exchange with Georgia. There is information that the case of one other Sochi resident, Aniko Kesyan, sentenced to an eight-year prison term, is similar to the cases of Sevastidi and Kharebava.

The circumstances of the case of Sochi resident Petr Parpulov, whom we also [consider](#) to be a political prisoner, are somewhat different, although he was also convicted for communicating with an acquaintance in Georgia and relating unclassified information.

All the above cases were overseen by one and the same FSB investigator, Roman Troyan, and the convictions were handed down by one and the same judge at Krasnodar region court, Vladimir Kobzev. Altogether in recent years at least ten convictions for treason and espionage have been handed down by this court, and we do not exclude the possibility that we shall discover new unlawful convictions of this kind. Apparently, what we are witnessing is a 'conveyor belt' at work in the local FSB which is simulating a campaign to defend State interests in the region.

Oksana Sevastidi was effectively deprived of legal assistance. While she did hire the services of a legal representative, this lawyer was largely inactive, apparently in the interests of the investigation. He did not present any petitions to the court, he did not demand that witnesses be questioned, and, most important, he submitted an appeal against the conviction outside the applicable time limit.

In October 2016 Sevastidi herself wrote to the Memorial Human Rights Centre asking for assistance. At the same time her mother approached Team-29, a human rights organization that has worked on a number of cases involving allegations of espionage. We agreed with the lawyers from Team-29 that we would work together on the case. Ivan Pavlov and Evgeny Smirnov submitted a petition to extend the time allowed for lodging an appeal, but this request was dismissed. The lawyers continue to use all possible legal means to secure a review of the conviction. However, the right of Sevastidi to a legal defence continues to be violated in the most egregious manner.

We demand that the courts allow Oksana Sevastidi to appeal against her conviction and that the conviction be quashed.

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

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