

Memorial considers the director of Moscow's Library of Ukrainian Literature Natalya Sharina a political prisoner

Natalya Grigoryevna Sharina, citizen of Russia, permanently residing in Moscow, director of state-funded cultural institution of the city of Moscow (SFCI) the Library of Ukrainian Literature, was detained on October 28, 2015, and on October 30 she was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial. Sharina is charged with committing a crime envisaged under point "b" of part 2, article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code ("Inciting hatred or enmity and insulting human dignity, committed by a person with the use of their work position.")

According to the investigation, in 2011-2015 Sharina distributed books to the library's visitors by Ukrainian nationalist Dmytro Korchynsky (who in the 2000s spoke on more than one occasion at events at the pro-Kremlin Seliger youth camp) that are recognised as extremist and banned for distribution. We note that only one of Korchynsky's books is included on the federal list of extremist materials – "War in a Crowd" (point 2089: Korchynsky, Dmytro. "Viyna u natovpi". Kiev, Amadey, 1999. Decision made by the Meshchansky district court of the city of Moscow on March 14, 2013.)

The opening of a criminal case against Natalya Sharina happened against the background of an anti-Ukrainian campaign that has been unceasing since spring 2014 in state media and in the statements of officials who occupy high leadership positions in the Russian Federation. One of the constituent parts of this campaign is the opening of criminal cases against citizens who publicly express a position on what is happening in Ukraine that is different from the official one, or that is in some way connected to Ukraine. From our point of view, the criminal case against the director of the library must be examined in the light of the aforementioned anti-Ukrainian campaign.

The criminal prosecution of the director of a library on a charge of the presence of publications recognised as extremist in the library's stock is a new, not previously practiced repressive method. Meanwhile, article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code envisages punishment for deliberate actions aimed at inciting hatred or enmity and insulting the dignity of a person or group of people, which in the case of Natalya Sharina is difficult to imagine even theoretically.

Natalya Sharina says she is innocent, maintaining that she strictly followed the laws of the Russian Federation during her work in the post of director of the Library of Ukrainian Literature. Moreover, she and other employees of the library assert that the books recognised as extremist that were confiscated from the library did not have a library stamp, were not numbered and were most likely planted to obtain a reason to open a criminal case.

The Memorial human rights centre considers it necessary to immediately release Natalya Sharina from house arrest and to close her criminal case.

Recognising a person as a political prisoner or as prosecuted for political reasons does not mean that the Memorial human rights centre agrees with their views and statements, or that it approves of their statements or actions.

More detail on the case of Natalya Sharina on our website: <http://memohrc.org/special-projects/sharina-natalya-grigorevna>