

Memorial recognizes three more Sochi residents, convicted for sending text messages, as political prisoners

Sochi residents Marina Dzhandzhgava, Inga Tutisani and Annik Kesyan were sentenced to 12, 6 and 8 years in a prison colony, respectively, under Article 275 (treason) of the Russian Criminal Code for sending text messages about military equipment seen on the railway (in the cases of Dzhandzhgava and Kesyan) or at sea (in the case of Tutisani) to their Georgian acquaintances (Dzhandzhgava and Kesyan, in the spring of 2008; Tutisani in the summer and autumn of 2009).

The information that they passed on was accessible to an unlimited number of people, and the women concerned were not aware of its classified nature. We consider it impermissible that civilians should be held legally responsible for safeguarding military secrets with which they have not been entrusted, and all the more that communications with foreigners about events and facts that are generally accessible should be criminalized.

Previously, in similar cases Sochi residents [Oksana Sevastidi](#) and Georgian citizen [Ekaterina Kharebava](#) were sentenced to seven years in prison. Memorial has recognized both as political prisoners. In the summer of 2016 Ekaterina was released as part of an exchange with Georgia, and Oksana was pardoned in March by Vladimir Putin.

The circumstances of the case of Sochi resident [Petr Parpulov](#), whom we also consider to be a political prisoner, are somewhat different. However, he has also been convicted for communicating with an acquaintance in Georgia and passing on non-classified information.

All the above cases, except that of Inga Tutisani, were conducted by one and the same FSB investigator Roman Troyan, and the convictions in the cases were handed down by one and the same judge of Krasnodar Regional Court, Vladimir Kobzev. Moreover, Kobzev was one of the three judges that heard the case of Tutisani. Altogether, in recent years at least 10 convictions for treason and espionage have been handed down by this court, and we do not exclude that we shall yet learn of other similar unlawful convictions.

It seems that the local FSB department is working like a production line in an effort to create the impression it is uncovering crimes of major state significance. This 'production line' can be seen at work in the dates of these identical cases: Dzhandzhgava was arrested in October 2012, Kharebava in May 2013, Tutisani in October 2013, Kesyan and Parpulov in February and March 2014 and Sevastidi on 15 January 2015.

Marina Dzhandzhgava, Inga Tutisani and Annik Kesyan have in practice been denied legal assistance. The investigation hindered, in every way possible, meetings between the defendants and their relatives, keeping them in isolation from the outside world, a fact which hindered their search for, and selection of, qualified defence lawyers, and the publicity of their cases in the media. The convictions of Tutisani and Kesyan were not even appealed.

From the start of this year the cases of the convicted Sochi 'traitors' were taken up by Team 29, a human rights organization specializing in espionage cases. Memorial Human Rights Centre works with the lawyers from Team 29. Defence lawyers Ivan Pavlov and Evgeny Smirnov use all possible legal mechanisms to achieve a review of the convictions: preparing cassational (*kassatsionnye*) appeals in the cases of Annik Kesyan and Inga Tutisani, and a supervisory (*nadzornaya*) appeal in the case of Marina Dzhandzhgava. Annik Kesyan and Inga Tutisani have already been brought from their prison colonies to Lefortovo remand centre in Moscow.

Memorial Human Rights Centre considers Marina Dzhandzhgava, Inga Tutisani and Annik Kesyan to be political prisoners. We demand that their convictions be quashed and that they be released immediately.

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, see: the case of [Marina Dzhandzhgava](#); the case of [Inga Tutisani](#) and the case of [Annik Kesyan](#).

PayPal – an e-wallet for giving help to all Russian political prisoners helppoliticalprisoners@gmail.com.