

## **Memorial Human Rights Center considers Alexey Sutuga a political prisoner**

Alexey Sutuga — laborer, anti-fascist activist, and member of the anarchist movement Autonomous Action — was convicted under article 213 of the Russian Criminal Code (Conspiracy to commit hooliganism) and article 116 (Battery) and sentenced to 3 years and 1 month in a penal labor colony. He has been held in prison since April 5, 2014.

Sutuga is accused of conspiring to attack several men believed to be affiliated with a neo-fascist group. On January 2, 2014, in Moscow's Sbarro Cafe, Sutuga allegedly hit one Rustam Mirza with a chair and then proceeded to beat a second, Vyacheslav Belov, with a hammer, inflicting at least ten blows to his face and body. Sutuga's alleged motives and co-conspirators have not been identified by the prosecution.

Sutuga maintains that he was invited into the cafe by three people who claimed to recognize him. Upon entering, the three men were drawn into a fight with patrons at a neighboring table. When Sutuga tried to separate them he was grabbed around the leg by a man in a red coat. Sutuga hit the man in order to free his leg, then ran from the cafe upon hearing a gunshot. The following day, Sutuga was arrested by anti-extremism police. At the station, some police officers humiliated him and distributed semi-nude photos of Sutuga to Ridus, an online newspaper.

The circumstances of the case point to its falsification. In a statement given by Mirza and Belov on January 3, 2015 it says "Among them was a well known leftist radical Alexei Sutuga who was recently released from prison and received amnesty a week ago." In fact, Sutuga had only received amnesty January 10, 2014. This suggests that Mirza and Belov learned about Sutuga's amnesty in advance from government authorities and planned the provocation in order to return Suguga to prison before the amnesty took effect. According to Novaya Gazeta, Mirza has previously testified in many cases claiming he was attacked by Anti-fascists. The rest of the testimony is also highly suspect. The third witness Parkohmenko who initially signed a statement saying that Sutuga hit Belov with a hammer, later refused to confirm the statement in court. The medical expert called by the prosecution said that the evidence was inconclusive.

Sutuga has faced government-sanctioned persecution for many years leading to his current imprisonment. In 2007, Sutuga was charged with stealing laboratory mice, and, although the charges were subsequently dropped due to lack of evidence, authorities have threatened him with reopening the case if he engages in political activity. He first received threats in 2008 when he was questioned by the anti-extremism department of the Moscow police after attending a labor union meeting. In 2012 Sutuga was charged with article 111 of the Russian Criminal Code (Intentional infliction of grave injury) and was detained for over a year before these charges were also dropped. Sutuga maintains that upon release the anti-extremism department continued to threaten him.

Sutuga has a wife and child who live in Ukraine and depend on him for support.

The Memorial Human Rights Center calls for the immediate release of Alexey Sutuga and demands the dismissal of all charges against him.

*The Memorial Human Rights Center does not necessarily endorse the views, statements or actions of persons recognized as political prisoners.*

More details on this case are available in Russian [here](#).