

## URGENT APPEAL – THE OBSERVATORY

RUS 001 / 0604 / OBS 045  
Harassment / Threats / Break-in  
**Russian Federation**  
June 17, 2004

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the international Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Tatarstan, Russian Federation.

### **Description of the situation :**

The Observatory has been informed of recent acts of harassment and intimidations against the Kazan Human Rights Center (KHRC), based in Kazan, Tatarstan, linked to their publications concerning human rights.

According to the information received, on May 5, 2004, members of the Security Direction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs required that a draft of KHRC's forthcoming book, *Tortures in Tatarstan, Proportion, Facts*, be submitted to the Ministry for review.

The following day, May 6, 2004, Kazan Human Rights Center held a press conference announcing the release of a second book, entitled *The Law and its victims, Tortures in Tatarstan*, which is a compilation of published articles concerning human rights violations by the Tatarstan Police, based on 140 complaints from April to May, 2004. On May 7, 2004, the repeat of a report on the press conference broadcasted the day before in the program *Time of Kazan* on TV Channel "Varian T," was cancelled. The cancellation by the direction of the channel was attributed to absence of objectivity on the part of the correspondent and the editor.

According to the information received, KHRC was publishing *The Law and its victims* in conjunction with the publishing house *Kheter*, who informed KHRC on May 5, 2004 that they were "having trouble" due to the publication of the book. On May 7, 2004, members of the Office of the Fight Against Economic Crimes of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (OFEC) accused KHRC of illegal publication of *The Law and its victims* and claimed that KHRC had used the *Kheter* publishing house logo, despite in-house publication by KHRC.

On May 13, 2004, the Ministry of Internal Affairs began a judicial investigation concerning the illegal use of the *Kheter* logo based on a complaint filed by *Kheter* that contradicted its previous connection with the publication of the book. In the framework of this investigation, while the KHRC director, Ms. Natalia Kablova, was away, the OFEC initiated an audit of KHRC accounts on May 14, 2004. This continuing audit includes financial documents, lists of KHRC subscribers, and activities of KHRC employees and their families. Additionally, the Center was informed on May 25, 2004 that the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation for the Republic of Tatarstan would begin an investigation of KHRC activities on June 1, 2004. This enquiry lasted one day.

In addition, the safety and security of the human rights defenders associated with KHRC and their families has been threatened. An F-1 grenade was found near the door of Mr. Vladimir Chikov, father of Pavel Chikov, the project director and former chair of the KHRC. Mr. V. Chikov had previously been contacted by OFEC on May 17, 2004, for an interview concerning the KHRC audit.

Following a joint press conference held on May 27, 2004 by the KHRC, the Niyhny Nvgorod Committee Against Torture and the Civil Verdict Foundation concerning the acts of harassment against the Kazan Human Rights Center, the KHRC headquarters was forcibly entered and ransacked later that day (4:45 pm). Two masked men wearing gloves broke into the premises, destroyed computers, printers, a scanner, and a television and then disappeared. An official investigation was opened.

The Observatory is deeply concerned by the acts of repression against KHRC. These acts are in flagrant violation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations on December 9, 1998, in particular article 6-b which states that "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and

knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Russian urging them to:

- i. end the acts of harassment against the Kazan Human Rights Center, as well as any interference in their activities;
- ii. investigate the attack against Mr. Chikov's apartment and the breaking-in of the KHRC's premises;
- iii. ensure the implementation of the provisions on the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN general Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular article 1 which states that "[e]very person has the right, individually or collectively, to promote the protection and fulfilment of human rights and fundamental liberties at the national and international level", as well as article 6-b mentioned above;
- iv. guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international instruments ratified by the Russian Federation.

**Addresses:**

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Paris - Geneva, June 17, 2004

Kindly inform the Observatory of any action undertaken quoting the code number of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, an FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:  
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