

URGENT ACTION

LIBRARIAN'S HOUSE ARREST EXTENDED

Librarian Natalya Sharina has been under house arrest since 30 October 2015 for the library holding “extremist literature”. She was charged with a new offence on 5 April which makes it possible to extend her period of house arrest for up to a year. She is a prisoner of conscience.

Natalya Sharina, the Director of the state-run Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow, has been under house arrest since 30 October 2015. She had been initially charged under anti-extremism legislation for allegedly distributing printed materials with “anti-Russian and anti-Russian state propaganda” after investigators allegedly found works by Ukrainian nationalist Dmitry Korchinsky, in a pile of books that had not yet been indexed or made available to borrowers. Natalya Sharina denied these belonged to the library and claims they had been secretly planted there by some law enforcement officials. This charge allowed for a pre-trial detention of six months which meant her house arrest was due to expire at the end of April.

However, on 5 April Natalya Sharina was charged with embezzlement for having allegedly misappropriated library funds to pay for a lawyer to defend her during a previous unfounded attempt to prosecute in 2011 – 2013. In 2010, Natalya Sharina was accused of distributing extremist literature by a Ukrainian author, but the charges were eventually dropped because the books were only declared extremist in 2013 and the library had stopped stocking them in 2011. The funds she allegedly used were those the library paid as salaries to its staff lawyers. Her current lawyer claims that this charge is baseless, both because she paid her own legal expenses using her own money, and because the library's lawyers were not licensed as *advokaty* to represent her in court.

This new offence carries a maximum prison sentence of 10 years and is classified as a serious crime, meaning that under Russian legislation Natalya Sharina can be held under house arrest or in a pre-trial detention centre for up to 18 months. She spent over two days in police detention in October 2015 before being placed under house arrest. She is only allowed contact with her lawyer and the close relatives she lives with. She cannot use the internet or telephone, except to call an ambulance. To leave the house for any reason other than a medical emergency, she must have the investigator's permission. A request for her to be allowed to take walks was refused.

Please write immediately in Russian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Russian authorities to release Natalya Sharina immediately and unconditionally as she has been detained solely for peacefully exercising her rights, and terminate the criminal proceedings against her;
- Urging them to respect the fundamental right to freedom of expression, including with respect to those who peacefully express criticism of the government or views that are contrary to the state policies and the views held by senior Russian officials or the views of the majority in Russia.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MAY 2016 TO:

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
Prosecutor General's Office
ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a
125993 Moscow GSP- 3
Russian Federation

Fax: +7 495 987 5841 / +7 495 692 1725

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General
Chairman of the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation

Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Tekhnicheskii pereulok, dom 2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation

Fax: +7499 265 90 77; +7499 265 97 75

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER V. YAKOVENKO, Embassy of the Russian Federation, 13 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QX tel: 020 7229 3620 email: info@rusemb.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 261/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR46/2900/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A criminal case was started in 2010 on the purported Library of Ukrainian Literature's distribution of "extremist literature" by Dmitry Korchinsky. His books were declared extremist by the Russian authorities only in 2013, but the library removed all his books in 2011, and the criminal case was stopped since there was no crime that had been committed.

The investigation against Natalya Sharina in October 2015 was started following a complaint by a former employee of the library who was dismissed in 2010.

Name: Natalya Sharina

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 261/15 Index: EUR 46/3849/2016 Issue Date: 15 April 2016