

URGENT ACTION

LAWYERS TARGETED FOR THEIR WORK, LIVES AT RISK

Two Ukrainian lawyers have been under sustained pressure from the Ukrainian authorities in connection with a high profile and deeply politicised case they are working on. One of them went missing on 6 March in suspicious circumstances.

Oksana Sokolovskaya (f) and **Yuri Grabovski (m)** have been acting as the defence lawyers in a high profile and deeply politicised case since 2015 and have repeatedly spoken publicly of the harassment and intimidation they have been subjected to by the Ukrainian authorities which, they believe, is an attempt to obstruct them from effectively defending their clients.

Yuri Grabovski was last seen in his office in Kyiv on the evening of 6 March. He took documents relating to the case from his safe and left with an unknown man. On 3 March he had posted on his Facebook page that he anticipated further harassment by the authorities to “destroy all of our evidence and intimidate any lawyers who ‘dare to go against the will’ of the system.” Around the time of his disappearance, uncharacteristic posts appeared on his Facebook page including one on 9 March saying he had left Ukraine against his will, out of concern for his safety. The authorities have since confirmed that he did not cross Ukraine’s borders through an official checkpoint. A criminal investigation into his disappearance was opened by the Prosecutor of Holoseyevskiy District in Kyiv on 10 March but was later unexpectedly referred to the Office of the Chief Military Prosecutor (the branch of the Prosecutor General’s Office dealing with crimes committed by the military and the security services). On 20 March, the Chief Military Prosecutor announced that a person had been detained in connection with the lawyer’s disappearance and is currently being questioned, but gave no further details.

Oksana Sokolovskaya began work on the case in May 2015, and a month later a criminal case was filed against her accusing her of causing grievous bodily harm during a domestic dispute dating back to July 2014. The Kyiv Prosecutor’s Office initially requested for her to be detained for 60 days arguing that she could abscond or influence witnesses. The judge refused the request but the Prosecutor appealed. The appeal hearing is scheduled for 23 March. Oksana Sokolovskaya claims the case is fabricated and intended to prevent her from carrying out her legitimate work to defend her client. Following Yuri Grabovski’s disappearance, Oksana Sokolovskaya asked the authorities to place her under an official protection scheme. Her request for state protection was granted on 21 March by a court decision, but to date she has not received any guards or other means of protection.

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

- Calling on the authorities to ensure that the disappearance of Yuri Grabovski is promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, and that his whereabouts are established and his safety ensured;
- Urging them to immediately provide Oksana Sokolovskaya with effective protection, and ensure that she can safely carry out her legitimate work as a lawyer;
- Calling on them to ensure that all lawyers in Ukraine are able to perform their professional duties without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 MAY 2016 TO:

Prosecutor General of Ukraine

Viktor Shokin

Vul. Riznytska 13/15

01601, Kyiv, Ukraine

Fax: +380 44 280 2603

Email: press-service@gp.gov.ua

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Head of the Security Service of Ukraine

Vasyl Hrytsak

Volodymyrska St., 35

01034, Kyiv-34, Ukraine

Fax: +380 44 279 30 40

Email: pressinfo@ssu.gov.ua

Salutation: Dear Colonel-General

And copies to:

Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine

Arsen Avakov

Bohomoltsa str. 10

01024, Kyiv, Ukraine

Fax: +380 44 256 16 33

Email: mvsinfo@mvsinfo.gov.ua

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country HER EXCELLENCY Ms Natalia Galibarenko, Embassy of Ukraine, 60 Holland Park W11 3SJ, 020 7727 6312, Fax 020 7792 1708

emb_gb@mfa.gov.ua, www.ukremb.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Oksana Sokolovskaya and Yuri Grabovski have been acting as the defence lawyers for two Russian citizens, Yevgeny Yerofeyev and Aleksander Aleksandrov, respectively. Yevgeny Yerofeyev and Aleksander Aleksandrov were injured and captured by Ukrainian forces in May 2015 in Lugansk Region, eastern Ukraine, following a battle between Ukrainian and separatist forces there. The Ukrainian authorities accuse them of being Russian servicemen, something which they reportedly initially confirmed but later denied. They are charged with illegal border crossing, illegal possession of arms and involvement in terrorist activity. The Russian authorities denied that either of them were acting members of the Russian military at the time of their capture and insisted that both had earlier resigned from military service and had come to Ukraine as “volunteers”.

During the investigation into Yuri Grabovski’s disappearance, his computer, which contains case-related materials, was seized by the investigation officials. The investigation, including all gathered evidence and the computer, is now overseen by the Chief Military Prosecutor’s Office which is also a party (state prosecution) in the court case against Yevgeny Yerofeyev and Aleksander Aleksandrov.

Name: Oksana Sokolovskaya (f) and Yuri Grabovski (m)

Gender: both

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