

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST IMPRISONED IN STRICT CONDITIONS

Natalya Filonova is an activist and journalist from Ulan-Ude, Russia's Eastern Siberia. In 2022, she was arrested at a peaceful protest against the conscription of men to fight in the Russian military in the war in Ukraine. She was subsequently sentenced to 2 years 10 months in prison for allegedly scratching two police officers. In prison, she faced repeated sanctions, including placement in a punishment cell, and recently, the tightening of her detention conditions. Amnesty International believes that Natalya Filonova's conviction and sentence are unlawful and based on politically motivated charges because of her peaceful activism. Therefore, she should be released immediately.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Hanko Andrey Viktorovich
Prosecutor of the Prosecutor's Office for the Irkutsk region
Volodarskogo st., 5
Irkutsk
664011
Russian Federation
Email: procuror@38.mailop.ru

Dear Mr. Hanko,

I am deeply concerned by the news that Natalya Filonova has been arbitrarily placed in strict conditions of detention. Natalia is serving her sentence in the IK-11 penal colony in Irkutsk region. The decision to transfer her to strict conditions was made by the administration of this penal colony.

Natalya Filonova, a 62-year-old civic activist and journalist, was convicted of allegedly "using violence against representatives of the authorities". Her charges are politically motivated, and she is being prosecuted solely for peacefully expressing her opinion. Therefore, she should be immediately released.

I am calling on you to take all necessary steps to ensure the immediate release of Natalya Filonova. While she is still incarcerated, I urge you to ensure that she is not subjected to arbitrary punishment. The alleged ill-treatment of Natalya Filonova in the IK-11 penal colony must be promptly and effectively investigated, and those suspected of responsibility should face fair disciplinary, administrative or criminal proceedings as appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Natalya Filonova has been an activist since the 1990s, based in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia (a region in Russia's Eastern Siberia). In 2008, she became a member of Solidarity movement, which called for democratic reforms. Natalya Filonova worked as a correspondent for the regional newspaper "Petrovsk-Zabaikalskie Ognii" ("Lights of Petrovsk-Zabaikalsky"). Then she started publishing her own newspaper "Vsemu naperekor» ("Despite everything").

Natalya Filonova took part in peaceful protests, including those in support of Aleksei Navalny, in memory of slain Solidarity leader Boris Nemtsov, and against Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

On 24 September 2022, Natalya Filonova was arbitrarily detained at a peaceful assembly against the forced conscription of men for the war in Ukraine (so-called "partial mobilization") held in Ulan-Ude, Buryatia's capital. The authorities arrested Natalya Filonova and initiated proceedings against her for alleged "repeated violation of the established procedure of holding public assemblies". However, on 26 September, the court dismissed this case and released Natalya Filonova. Police immediately arrested her again and opened a criminal case against her under Article 318 of the Criminal Code: "Use of violence against a representative of the authorities". According to the investigators, she had attacked two police officers while she was being transferred. Filonova allegedly hit one police officer and poked another in the face with a pen while in a police car.

Charges of using force against police officers are widely used in Russia to prosecute activists participating in rallies. The protest that Natalya participated in was peaceful, as was all her previous activism and journalistic work. As an activist, she regularly faced pressure from the authorities, including multiple arrests for alleged violations of Russia's excessively restrictive legislation on public assemblies. Therefore, Amnesty International believes that Natalya's conviction and sentence are politically motivated with the aim of silencing her criticism of the authorities.

On 22 October 2022, Natalya Filonova was detained. Initially she was placed under house arrest, but on 17 November 2022 she was put in pre-trial detention for violating the conditions of her house arrest (she had to visit a nearby town, where her husband had been urgently hospitalized leaving their child alone).

On 31 August 2023, Oktyabrsky District Court of Ulan-Ude sentenced Natalya Filonova to two years and 10 months in prison.

In May 2024, Natalya Filonova said she had rejected an offer of a presidential pardon, because she said this would mean her admitting guilt. According to Natalya Filonova, after this she began to be subjected to additional punishments in prison, although she had previously been in good standing. She was labelled for "extremism", placed in a solitary punishment cell on three occasions, and in July was transferred to detention under strict conditions.

Strict conditions of detention, intended for "persistent offenders" of prison rules, mean that the prisoner is held in a separate locked barracks. They are prohibited from freely moving around the penal colony, they can only be outdoors for an hour and a half per day, their expenses for purchasing food, the number of family visits and parcels are more limited. Strict conditions of detention is an indefinite punishment (within the term of imprisonment), assigned and removed at the discretion of the administration of the penal colony.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 September 2024

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Natalya Filonova, she/her