



UA 98/21

AI Index: EUR 46/4737/2021 of 16 September 2021

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION
SHAMAN CHALLENGES INDEFINITE HOSPITALIZATION**

On 23 September, the Supreme Court of Sakha will consider shaman Aleksandr Gabyshev's appeal against the decision to confine him to psychiatric hospital. In the meantime, he is in pretrial detention and under investigation for alleged violence against a police officer. The shaman has been long targeted by the authorities after he vowed in 2019 to walk from Siberia to Moscow and use his shamanic powers "to purge" President Vladimir Putin. He has been repeatedly arbitrarily arrested, subjected to humiliating searches and examinations, and confined in a psychiatric institution, all for criticizing the Russian authorities and his peaceful activism.

Please ask the Prosecutor to:

- Ensure that Aleksandr Gabyshev is not subjected to punitive psychiatry and that his harassment by police in retaliation for his peaceful activism stops.
- Ensure that any allegations against him are effectively and impartially investigated and that his right to a fair trial is fully respected.

Write to:

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Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Please copy:

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Additional Information

On 23 September 2021, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) will consider the appeal by Aleksandr Gabyshev against an earlier court decision to confine him indefinitely in a psychiatric institution and authorizing his forcible treatment.

Aleksandr Gabyshev is a shaman who is known for his intention, declared 2019, to walk 8,500 kilometres from Yakutsk to Moscow and use his shamanic powers “to purge” President Vladimir Putin from the Kremlin. Weeks later and after walking hundreds of kilometres, Aleksandr Gabyshev was arbitrarily arrested by police in September 2019 and placed in a psychiatric institution but soon released and placed under surveillance, and named a suspect under Article 280(1) of the Criminal Code (“public calls for extremist activities”). He tried to walk to Moscow once again, and was again arbitrarily arrested in May 2020, allegedly for refusing to be tested for Covid-19. He was examined by psychiatrists and found to be “suffering from over-valuing of his own personality” in connection with his declared intention “to harm the government.” He was released on 22 July 2020, following public outcry in Russia and internationally.

On 27 January 2021, days after Aleksandr Gabyshev had announced preparations for another march to Moscow, his home was raided by some 50 law enforcement officers reportedly lead by the Deputy Interior Minister of Yakutia. The pretext for the raid was Aleksandr Gabyshev’s non-attendance of a psychiatrist in connection with his purported mental health condition. Police claim that during his apprehension, Aleksandr Gabyshev drew a ceremonial Yakut sword and caused an injury (small cut) to one of the officers. On 2 February, Yakutsk City Court ruled to confine him to a psychiatric institution for medical examination, and three weeks later, the Investigative Committee announced that he was officially charged with making “calls for extremism” and “using violence against police officers”. On 18 March, medical experts announced that he was diagnosed with a mental health issue which required hospitalization and treatment. On 26 July, Yakutsk City Court ruled to confine Aleksandr Gabyshev to the Yakut Republican Psychoneurological Dispensary for an indefinite period while he was being investigated under the above-mentioned allegations.