

UA 71/22

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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS IN PRISON**

On 15 July, a court in Krasnodar (southern Russia) sentenced Andrei Pivovarov to four years in prison for “carrying out activities of an undesirable organization”, under a law that contravenes Russia’s international human rights obligations. Andrei Pivovarov is a political activist, human rights defender and the former director of Open Russia, an organisation advocating for democracy and human rights. On 31 May 2021, he was taken off a flight in Saint Petersburg and arbitrarily detained since. Andrei Pivovarov has committed no internationally recognized crime and has been jailed for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association. He is appealing his conviction.

Andrei Pivovarov’s only “crime” was posting information about the peaceful and lawful activities of the Russian non-governmental organisation Open Russia. He was arrested on 31 May 2021 and put in pretrial detention in Krasnodar, a city many kilometres away from his home.

Andrei Pivovarov is a prominent political activist and human rights defender from Saint Petersburg. He has been involved in the democracy and human rights movement in Russia for more than 15 years and has never used or condoned violence. Exercising one’s rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association is not a crime. They are guaranteed by the Russian Constitution and international law.

**Write to the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation urging him to:**

- drop the criminal charges against Andrei Pivovarov, end his prosecution and immediately and unconditionally release him

**Write to:**

**(Please note – Canada Post has currently suspended mail delivery to the Russian Federation – direct your letter to the Ambassador at this time)**

Igor Victorovich Krasnov  
Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation  
15a Bolshaya Dmitrovka street  
Moscow 125993  
Russian Federation  
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General,

**And Copy:**

His Excellency Oleg Stepanov, Ambassador  
Embassy of the Russian Federation  
285 Charlotte Street  
Ottawa, ON K1N 8L5  
Fax: 613 236-6342  
Email: info@rusembassy.ca

### **Additional information**

Andrei Pivovarov is a prominent Russian political activist, human rights defender and ex-director of the now banned organisation Open Russia. He has been involved in the work of various pro-democracy and human rights groups in Saint Petersburg since the mid-2000s. Open Russia was formed with the support of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former Russian businessman and prisoner of conscience, now living in the United Kingdom. The organisation supported opposition candidates in local elections and independent journalists, organized peaceful protests, helped individuals prosecuted on political grounds and conducted other similar activities.

On 26 April 2017, the Prosecutor General's office arbitrarily designated two British NGOs with similar names (Otkrytaya Rossia and Open Russia Civic Movement) as "undesirable organizations" under a restrictive law, which makes it an offence in Russia to be involved in any activities associated with organisations labelled as "foreign organisations". Although initially the authorities claimed that this move would not affect Open Russia, which is a domestic, and not foreign entity, they later changed their approach and began persecuting Open Russia's activists. These included Anastasia Shevchenko and Mikhail Iosilevich, who were both recognized by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

In all the reported cases, the very fact of having some sort of connection to Open Russia, or even just sharing its materials, was sufficient to impose fines and, later, penalties under criminal law. There has been no evidence of the use of violence or other internationally recognized crimes committed or planned by Open Russia.

In March 2021, a protocol was drawn up against Andrei Pivovarov under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences (carrying out the activities of an undesirable organization) in connection with the Moscow Congress of Municipal Deputies, which, according to the police, was organized by the "undesirable" Open Russia Civic Movement.

In April 2021, an administrative case under the same article was initiated against Andrei Pivovarov for activities in 2020, when he delivered personal protective equipment to an ambulance station in Saint Petersburg during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authorities said that in doing so, he "acted on behalf of the foreign non-governmental organization Open Russia".

On 27 May 2021, Open Russia announced the cessation of its activities in connection with the upcoming tightening of legislation on "undesirable organizations" and the persecution of its activists. See Amnesty International's reaction here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/05/russia-open-russia-movement-forced-to-dissolve-while-its-members-face-severe-reprisals/>

On 29 May 2021, a criminal case was initiated against Andrei Pivovarov under Article 284 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (carrying out the activities of an undesirable organization).

On 31 May 2021 Andrei Pivovarov was taken off a flight from Saint Petersburg to Warsaw and arbitrarily detained (see more details here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/06/russia-immediately-release-open-russia-leader-detained-after-being-hauled-off->

[flight/](#)). The accusation was based on the information that on 12 August 2020, Andrei Pivovarov, while in Krasnodar, had reposted on Facebook information relating to opposition candidates in the local elections. The authorities claimed that this was an activity of the “undesirable” Open Russia. Andrei Pivovarov was transferred to Krasnodar and has remained in detention there since. His communication with the outside world was severely restricted, and he had been allowed no family visits until the trial started at the end of 2021.

On 11 October 2021, the Investigative Committee updated the charges against Andrei Pivovarov and included thirty of his posts and one repost on Facebook on topics such as the protests in Khabarovsk, criticism of amendments to the Russian Constitution and support for detained protesters.

On 15 July 2022, the Leninsky District Court of Krasnodar sentenced Andrei Pivovarov to four years in a penal colony. His lawyer appealed the verdict.