

## **Denis Bakholdin, charged with taking part in Right Sector, is a political prisoner**

Denis Bakholdin, a Moscow activist who emigrated in the autumn of 2014 to Ukraine, is being held in a pre-trial detention facility in Bryansk. He has been charged under Article 282.2, Section 2, of the Russian Criminal Code (taking part in the activity of an NGO or religious association, or other organization, with regard to which a court order has entered into force liquidating the organization or banning its activities on grounds of extremism). The prosecution considers that the whole time Bakholdin was in Ukraine he was a member of Right Sector, which is banned in Russia.

Bakholdin was detained in a border zone when travelling to Russia to see his mother. He says that for twelve hours he was handcuffed to a radiator and beaten on his legs and head in an attempt to force him to confess. Nonetheless, Bakholdin did not give testimony in the case and has refused to take part in investigative procedures.

The sole charge against him at present is participation in Right Sector. The investigation conducted its work so carelessly that it counts commission of the “crime” as starting on 24 October 2014 (the date Bakholdin crossed the border from Belarus to Ukraine), whereas Right Sector was banned by decision of the Russian Supreme Court only on 17 November 2014.

We believe the decision of the Supreme Court banning Right Sector does not stand up to criticism. The ban is based on conjectures and unverified facts, including a fake “appeal by Dmitry Yarosh to Doku Umarov.” Right Sector has denied authorship of this alleged appeal. We believe that no criminal prosecution can be based on a decision of that quality.

Moreover, although Article 282.2 provides a formal definition of the crime (according to which, to be convicted, it is enough to be a participant in a banned group), we point out that, according to the Russian Criminal Code, an action may only be considered a crime, if it constitutes a danger to the public. Bakholdin has not been charged with any dangerous activities. The investigation has failed to make clear in what way, exactly, the activity of Right Sector in Ukraine could be directed at the “violent change of the foundations of the constitutional order and violation of the integrity of the Russian Federation, undermining the security of the state.”

On this basis, we conclude that Bakholdin has been deprived of his liberty despite the fact that there has been no real violation of the law. The struggle against Right Sector is an example of a “witch hunt” in contemporary Russia. It is part of the political campaign directly related to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

We demand the release of Denis Bakholdin.

*Recognition of an individual as a political prisoner, or of a prosecution as politically motivated, does not imply that Memorial Human Rights Centre shares or approves the individual's views, statements or actions.*

For more information about this case, see [here](#).

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