

URGENT ACTION

PEACEFUL PROTESTER IN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION

On 7 May, Dzerzhinsky District Court in Saint-Petersburg, Russia, remanded Mikhail Tsakunov in pre-trial detention until 4 July for alleged use of violence against a police officer. If found guilty, Mikhail Tsakunov could face 10 years in prison. However, the charges against him contravene publicly available video footage.

Mikhail Tsakunov was arrested on 5 May in central Saint-Petersburg, Russia, where over 2,000 people assembled to protest Vladimir Putin's re-election as president. On 6 May, after a night in the police station, Mikhail Tsakunov was issued with a fine of 10,000 Russian roubles (US \$158) by Kuybyshevskiy District Court for participating in the "unauthorised" protest rally. After the hearing, Mikhail Tsakunov was escorted back to the police station and informed about criminal proceedings against him under Article 318(2) of the Russian Criminal Code, "violence against a police officer endangering their life or health" – a crime punishable with up to 10 years of imprisonment. A police officer claimed that Mikhail Tsakunov had intentionally punched him in the face and knocked out a tooth. On 7 May, Dzerzhinsky District Court ruled to remand Tsakunov in pre-trial detention until 4 July. On 8 May, Mikhail Tsakunov's lawyer appealed the decision in the Saint-Petersburg City Court.

The moment of Mikhail Tsakunov's arrest is captured in an amateur video which is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhczxJAwvSA>). Mikhail Tsakunov is seen standing slightly aside from other protesters, with his girlfriend and another man while holding a semi-deflated human-size yellow rubber duck. They are approached by a group of riot police officers, who, without any warning, launched at them. The police are seen arresting the other man. They then continued to chase Mikhail Tsakunov and his girlfriend who are both trying to walk away, and throw both of them to the ground. Four police officers instantly grab Mikhail Tsakunov's hands while he is still on the ground, lift him and lead him away without letting go of his hands. Mikhail Tsakunov's girlfriend was detained together with him, but was released in the evening of 5 May.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Insisting that the authorities release Mikhail Tsakunov immediately and unconditionally as he has been arrested solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Calling for an impartial investigation into the circumstances of his arrest and the use of force by police;
- Calling on Russian authorities to fully respect and uphold the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Russia.

Contact these two officials by 21 June, 2018:

Prosecutor General

Yuriy Chaika

Prosecutor General's Office

ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a

125993 Moscow GSP- 3

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 495 987 58 41/ +7 495 692 17 25

Online submissions (accepted only in

Russian): <https://ipriem.genproc.gov.ru/contacts/ipriem/>

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Ambassador Anatoly Antonov,

Embassy of the Russian Federation

2650 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington DC 20007

Phone: 1 202 298 5700 | Fax: 1 202 298 5735

Email: rusembusa@mid.ru

Twitter: [@mfa_russia](https://twitter.com/mfa_russia)

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 90.18*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Protest rallies were organized in over a hundred cities and towns across Russia on 5 May 2018, to protest Vladimir Putin's re-election as president. Vladimir Putin was inaugurated two days after, on 7 May, when he became Russia's president for a fourth time. In Moscow, organized groups of men wearing "Cossack" uniform attacked peaceful protesters seeking to disperse them, acting with total impunity and in full view of the police who were also using excessive force to end the demonstration (see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/05/russia-outrageous-use-of-force-against-protesters-in-moscow-and-all-over-the-country/>).

Mikhail Tsakunov denies all charges against him. His lawyer has appealed the judge's decision to remand Mikhail Tsakunov and requested to place him under travel restrictions or house arrest instead. In court, Mikhail Tsakunov demonstrated bruises he received as result of the excessive force used by police officers against him during the arrest. Mikhail Tsakunov also testified that officers repeatedly abused him verbally while he was inside the police bus.

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly have been increasingly restricted in Russia since 2012, in law and in practice, and remain under severe clampdown. The authorities regard any gathering held without their express prior permission, however peaceful and small, as "unauthorised". They regularly deploy police to disrupt and disperse such gatherings, arrest their participants, and prosecute the detained protesters in administrative, and in some instances criminal, proceedings. For details see: *Russian Federation: The right to freedom of peaceful assembly – freedom in all but name*, available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/8027/2018/en/>.

Name: Mikhail Tsakunov
Gender m/f: m

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