

URGENT ACTION

CONVICTION OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE UPHELD

The Russian Military Court of Appeals upheld the conviction of Crimean Tatar human rights defender Emir-Usein Kuku and his five co-defendants on 25 June. They are all prisoners of conscience, sentenced to lengthy prison sentences on trumped-up charges and following unfair trials, and must be released.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

On 25 June, the Russian Military Court of Appeals upheld the conviction and left in place the jail sentences of human rights defender Emir-Usein Kuku and his co-defendants. The six men were arrested in 2016 and convicted in November 2019 under trumped-up terrorism-related charges and other charges, even though no credible evidence of their involvement in any internationally recognizable crime was presented during their trial. Muslim Aliyev was sentenced to 19 years in prison, Enver Bekirov to 18 years, Vadim Siruk and Emir-Usein Kuku to 12 years each, Refat Alimov to eight years and Arsen Dzhapparov to seven years.

The prosecution of the six men has been politically motivated and emblematic of the persecution of members of the Crimean Tatar community and all dissenting voices in Crimea following its occupation and illegal annexation by Russia in 2014. In the case of Emir-Usein Kuku, the prosecution has been in retaliation for exposing human rights violations in Crimea and the culmination of the numerous instances of harassment of him, his wife and their children by the Russian authorities. The political nature of the prosecution has been contested by numerous NGOs and intergovernmental organisations over the years. For instance, the European Parliament issued two resolutions in 2017 and 2018 in support of Emir-Usein Kuku and others and the European Union External Action Service joined the public condemnation of the sentencing of the six men in 2019. In March, the High Representative of the EU, Josep Borrell, issued a [Declaration](#) on behalf of the European Union reiterating the EU's call for the immediate release of Emir-Usein Kuku and his five co-defendants. The Delegation of the EU to Russia expressed concern on [Twitter](#) ahead of the appeal decision and committed to closely monitoring the court hearing.

Emir-Usein Kuku and his co-defendants, as well as their legal teams and families are convinced that all the international pressure and outcry has been important, as it provides them with visibility and thus serves as a restraint on the Russian authorities against further abuses, and the solidarity is undeniably welcome.

Despite this setback, Emir-Usein Kuku will continue challenging his conviction and believes that change and freedom will eventually come. In his final speech in court, he thanked Amnesty International and everyone who supported him. He said: **"I'd like to thank all the people, regardless of their ethnic background or religion, who have been supporting us in any way during this time — those who have invested their time and efforts, those who have risked their freedom to spread a word about us at individual pickets or rallies and those who have travelled thousands of kilometres to attend our court hearings. I am particularly grateful to international and human rights NGOs, such as Amnesty International [...]. We are awaiting change. Our hearts demand change! Those who deprived us of our liberty will not see us discouraged or asking for mercy."**

NAME AND PRONOUN: Emir-Usein Kuku (he/him), Muslim Aliev (he/him), Vadim Siruk (he/him), Enver Bekirov (he/him), Arsen Dzhapparov (he/him) and Refat Alimov (he/him).

THIS IS THE FOURTH AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 126/19.

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR46/2507/2020/en/>