

Prosecutor of Nizhnii Novgorod Region

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Dear Prosecutor,

I am writing to express my dismay about the arbitrary detention and ongoing unfounded criminal prosecution of civil society activist Mikhail Iosilevich.

On 8 October 2020, Mikhail Iosilevich was charged under Article 284.1 of the Russian Criminal Code for his alleged cooperation with an "undesirable organization". The investigators purport that he provided premises for a training conducted by Open Russia, an organization whose UK registered namesake is listed as "undesirable". This is a "crime" only under Russian legislation, which contravenes Russia's international human rights obligations and must be repealed. Moreover, the prosecution of Mikhail Iosilevich is completely unfounded; the training had been conducted by another organization, Golos, (a Russian movement of election monitors), and there is no evidence of his involvement with Open Russia.

On 30 January 2021, a district court remanded Mikhail Iosilevich for allegedly making a threatening phone call to a "witness" in his case. An expert examination of the audio recording of the alleged call concluded that it was not Mikhail Iosilevich's voice. However, the Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Court rejected Mikhail Iosilevich's appeal and supported his detention. His detention was subsequently extended, the last time until 28 August. It is expected that the case will be submitted to court shortly after. Mikhail Iosilevich has committed no internationally recognizable crime. He is being targeted for his peaceful activism and for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

I urge you to ensure Mikhail Iosilevich' immediate release and an end to his unfounded criminal prosecution.

Yours sincerely,