

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/russie-journalists-persecuted-by-judges-02-01-2014,45691.html>

---

Europe/Ex-USSR - Russia

Denial of justice

## Journalists persecuted by judges in Rostov-on-Don

2 January 2014

---

The release of Mikhail Khodorkovski, Pussy Riot and Greenpeace activists must not divert attention from the many other threats to fundamental freedoms in Russia

Reporters Without Borders is alarmed by the judicial harassment of journalists critical of the authorities in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don. **Sergei Reznik**, a well-known journalist and blogger, has been sentenced to 18 months in a labour camp, while **Aleksandr Tolmachev**, another journalist, has been in pre-trial detention for the past two years.

Reznik, 37, has been an unrelenting critic of the local authorities and corruption on his [blog](#) and in articles for the newspaper *Yuzhny Federalny* and *Novaya Gazeta's* regional online supplement *Yuzhnom Federalnom*.

He received the 18-month sentence from Rostov's Pervomayski district court on 26 November after being convicted under articles 204-2-b, 306-3 and 319 of the federal penal code of offering 2,000 roubles to a garage mechanic to get a roadworthiness certificate for his car, inventing the telephone threats he had reported to the police, and insulting a judge on his blog.

"It is incomprehensible that the court tried three such different charges at the same time," Reporters Without Borders said. "The proceedings suffered many flaws of both a procedural and substantive nature.

"The charge that he made up the threats was clearly unfounded as he had to be hospitalized as a result of a [violent attack](#) on 22 October. The lack of transparency surrounding this trial is intolerable and shows that his conviction was a reprisal for his articles."

Many demonstrations have been held in support of Reznik, who remains in provisional detention pending the outcome of his appeal. Hundreds of people have signed a petition accusing the authorities of persecuting him in an attempt to silence him.

Tolmachev, the 58-year-old editor of the magazine *Upolnomochen Zayavit* and the newspaper *Pro Rostov*, has been held since December 2011 despite having serious health problems.

He had just been acquitted in a libel case when he was arrested on 20 December 2011 under articles 91 and 159 of the federal penal code for allegedly extorting 1 million roubles from a businessman in nearby Novocherkassk by threatening to publish compromising information about him.

Arguing that his journalistic activities could influence the course of the case, judges ordered him placed not only in pre-trial detention but also solitary confinement. His detention has been extended month after month ever since then, while the hearings in his case have repeatedly been postponed although his health has deteriorated dramatically. The next hearing is scheduled for 4 February.

"It is hard to interpret the repeated extensions of Tolmachev's pre-trial detention as anything other than a repressive measure, especially as the investigation ended months ago and he has serious health problems. Why cannot he be granted a conditional release that would allow him to seek appropriate medical care while complying with court summonses?"

Reporters Without Borders added: "Furthermore, the fact that individuals who had been criticized in Tolmachev's articles are now in charge of his case constitutes a glaring violation of his right to due process."

Tolmachev is renowned in the Rostov region for denouncing judicial and political corruption and organized crime. A major online campaign is being waged against his continuing detention and many street demonstrations have been held to demand his release.

Russia is ranked 148th out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

*(Photo : Yuzhny Federalny)*

---