

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/russia-two-months-detention-for-russian-26-09-2013,45240.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Russia

Absurd charge

Two months detention for Russian photographer on Greenpeace vessel

26 September 2013

Reporters Without Borders is appalled that a court in the northwestern city of Murmansk today ordered that [Denis Sinyakov](#) (Денис Синяков), a well-known Russian freelance photographer who was aboard [a Greenpeace vessel intercepted in Russian Arctic waters on 19 September](#), be placed in preventive detention for two months.

"Sinyakov was arrested while working as a journalist and his detention constitutes an unacceptable violation of freedom of information," Reporters Without Borders said. "By investigating this photographer and the Greenpeace activists he was accompanying on such an absurd accusation as piracy, the Russian Investigative Committee is criminalizing both journalists and environmental activism.

"If Russia's constitutional guarantees have any meaning, neither Greenpeace's peaceful protest nor, even more so, Sinyakov's journalistic coverage of the protest constitute a crime. We urge the authorities to release this photographer at once and to drop this investigation."

The Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise set off in late August for Russian Arctic waters to draw attention to the potential environmental consequences of oil exploration in the region. On 18 September, members of its crew tried to scale the Prirazlomnaya offshore drilling platform, which is owned by the Russian gas company Gazprom.

The next day, Russian special forces seized control of the Arctic Sunrise and began towing it to Murmansk. On 24 September, all 30 people aboard were placed in police custody in the Murmansk area and the authorities announced that they were being investigated for "piracy," which carries a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

Sinyakov was one of the first to appear in court today. Noting that he "often travels abroad" and might try to elude the authorities, the court ruled that he should be held for two months pending the outcome of the investigation.

Sinyakov told the court: "This 'criminal activity' is journalism and I will continue to practice it [...] Greenpeace is an organization with a 40-year history and is well known for its activities. But I don't work for it. I am a journalist. You can see my photos in the media in Russia and all over the world. All my equipment has been seized. My only weapon is my camera."

Employed on a freelance basis by such news agencies as *Reuters* and *AFP*, Sinyakov also [does occasional reporting assignments for Greenpeace](#) and it was in this capacity that he was aboard the Arctic Sunrise. He took most of the photos of the Arctic Sunrise being boarded by Russian special forces that have appeared in the press.



Reporters Without Borders supports the call issued by Russian journalists for a demonstration at 5 p.m. today outside Investigative Committee headquarters in Moscow to protest against Sinyakov's detention.

To go further: [Sign Greenpeace petition](#) to demand the release of all who were aboard the Arctic Sunrise.

Main photo: [Denis Sinyakov](#) / Greenpeace

Courtroom photo: [Blogger51](#)

You can download those documents on our website :

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