



**BY AIRMAIL**

President Vladimir Putin  
Office of the President  
Llyinka street 23  
103132 MOSCOW  
**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

Amsterdam, 30 December 2014

Dear Mr President

Re: Attack on human rights lawyer Vitaly Cherkasov

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political Dutch foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession.

Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned for Vitaly Cherkasov, a human rights lawyer who was attacked after defending an LGBTI rights activist in court. The police has failed to respond adequately to his request of assistance.

Vitaly Cherkasov is a member of the human rights group 'Agora' which provides legal advocacy to civil society organizations and individuals in the field of human rights, including LGBTI rights. On 25 November 2014 Vitaly Cherkasov represented LGTBI activist Kirill Kaulgin in Lomonosovsky District Court in St Petersburg. According to our information, Vitaly Cherkasov was verbally attacked for representing Kirill Kaulgin before and during the hearing by approximately ten people who called themselves 'Orthodox Church activists'. Amongst this group, Vitaly Cherkasov identified Anatoly Artukh, an activist from the Narodny Sober conservative movement. Anatoly Artukh is also the assistant to Mr. Vitaly Milonov, a member of the Parliament of St Petersburg and one of the initiators of the 'propaganda of homosexuality among minors' legislation.

After the hearing, Vitaly Cherkasov was followed by the group and several court bailiffs had to escort Vitaly Cherkasov for his protection. The 'Orthodox Church activists' tried to spray an unknown liquid onto Vitaly Cherkasov's face using two syringes. Vitaly Cherkasov managed to move out the way and the liquid landed on his clothes and hands.

Following the incident, we are aware that Vitaly Cherkasov attended the police station, asked the police for assistance and requested that they take samples of the liquid sprayed on his clothes but was refused help and no samples were taken.

Vitaly Cherkasov is not the first lawyer of Agora who faces threats and harassment as a result of discharging their professional duties. In June 2011, Mr. Inur Sharapov received several phone messages which contained death threats. In 2012 and 2013, human rights lawyers Mr. Sergey Golubok and Mr. Dmitri Dinze received threats of physical attacks for representing LGBTI activists.

As a member of the United Nations Assembly, the Russian Federation is bound by the UN Basic Principles of the Role of Lawyers adopted by the Assembly in 1990. We would draw your attention to Articles 16, 17 and 18 of the Principles in particular which state that:

Lawyers for Lawyers has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 2013

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*16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (...).*

*17. Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.*

*18. Lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions.*

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urge you to:

- Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the threats, harassment and bodily attack suffered by Vitaly Cherkosov with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards.
- Guarantee in all circumstances that all lawyers in the Russian Federation are able to practice law without threat, intimidation, hindrance, harassment, improper interference or reprisals.

We thank you for your attention to this very important matter and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. We are confident of your good will and sense of justice and will continue to monitor this case closely.

On behalf of the President of Lawyers for Lawyers, Phon van den Biesen,

Yours sincerely  
**Lawyers for Lawyers**

Adrie van de Streek  
Executive director

Copies of this letter were sent to:

- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Russian Federation, Mr. Ron J.P.M van Dartel
- Consulate-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, Mr. Jennes de Mol
- Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dr Roman Kolodkin

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