

January 17, 2025

Statement
**We demand to stop the prosecution and release
advocates Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser
and Igor Sergunin**

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In October 2023, lawyers Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser and Igor Sergunin (included in Rosfinmonitoring's list of «terrorists and extremists») were searched, detained and imprisoned in Russia.

The lawyers represented Alexei Navalny, a Russian opposition politician whose complaints have been repeatedly decided by the European Court of Human Rights for violations of his rights guaranteed by the European Convention, in particular for arbitrary deprivation of his liberty on political grounds. Alexei Navalny was included in the «list of extremists and terrorists» of Rosfinmonitoring, and the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), which he founded, was recognized as an «extremist» organization and banned in the Russian Federation. Russian legislation on extremist activity has also been recognized by the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations as not complying with international standards.

On January 17, 2025, the verdict of the Petushinsky District Court of the Vladimir region of the Russian Federation, which considered the case in closed proceedings, found the lawyers Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser and Igor Sergunin guilty of committing an extremist crime and sentenced them to long prison terms. In reality, the lawyers were convicted for carrying out ordinary advocacy activities, and by virtue of this sentence they are deprived of access to the profession.

On the basis of the provisions of Articles 6 and 18 of the Federal Law «On Advocacy and the Legal Profession in the Russian Federation» of 31.05.2002 No. 63-FZ, Article 53 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation, paragraphs 12-16 and 18 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, lawyers are not identified with the defendant and his interests, they have the right to meet with him without hindrance, to protect his interests by all lawful means, while the state is obliged to ensure their independence, freedom from interference in their activities and defense of their professional activities.

There is no liability in the law for the lawyer's ensuring the communication of the principal with the outside world, and it cannot be provided for. The activity of a lawyer, which is expressed in receiving from a detained client information related to the protection of his rights and freedoms, and the subsequent communication of this information to third parties for its further public dissemination in his interests, cannot be criminalized.

The criminal case of lawyers Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser and Igor Sergunin is a vivid example of an unconstitutional distortion of the meaning, content and application of laws, which resulted in lawyers being identified with their client and his interests.

The criminalization of advocacy is carried out for politically motivated reasons, and also entails the achievement of a «frozen effect» aimed at making representatives of the legal community wary of defending in good faith in «sensitive» cases for the state.

The General Council of the International Association of Russian Advocates declares the illegality and inadmissibility of the prosecution of lawyers Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser and Igor Sergunin for practicing law and the need for their immediate release and rehabilitation.

We appeal to the United Nations, international and national associations of lawyers and jurists, and human rights organizations to protest against the prosecution of lawyers Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser and Igor Sergunin and to support efforts to protect and release them.

General Council of the International Association of Russian Advocates