



## Public Statement

### **The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the arrest and administrative conviction of lawyer Emil Kurbedinov in Crimea**

Toronto, ON — The Law Society of Upper Canada expresses grave concern about the arrest and administrative conviction of lawyer Emil Kurbedinov in Crimea.

Emil Kurbedinov is a vocal human rights lawyer based in Crimea. Since the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, he has actively defended Crimean Tatars, journalists and civil society activists. He has also drawn attention to human rights violations in Crimea through the use of social media, participation in international conferences and reports to international human rights organizations.

Reports indicate that on the morning of January 26, 2017, Emil Kurbedinov was detained by a group of masked and armed representatives of Crimea's Centre for Counteracting Extremism and taken to a local directorate of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) for interrogation. Following his arrest, Emil Kurbedinov's office was searched and all electronic equipment seized. That same day, the Zheleznodorozhny district court of Simferopol found him guilty of "propagandizing for extremist organizations" and sentenced him to ten days of administrative detention.

The charge and conviction have been attributed to a social media post Emil Kurbedinov made on June 6, 2013. According to the court, the impugned post, a video recording of Hizb ut Tahrir demonstrations which took place in Crimea in 2013, displayed "symbols of the terrorist organization 'Hizb ut Tahrir'". While Hizb ut Tahrir is not a prohibited organization under Ukrainian law, it was deemed a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court in 2003.

The Law Society is troubled by Emil Kurbedinov's situation and urges the Government of Russia to comply with Russia's obligations under international human rights laws, including the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 of the *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Article 17 states:

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

Article 18 states:

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

Article 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the right to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the Government of Russia to:

- a. immediately and unconditionally vacate the conviction rendered against Emil Kurbedinov;
- b. put an end to all acts of harassment against Emil Kurbedinov and all other human rights lawyers and defenders in Crimea and Russia;
- c. guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Emil Kurbedinov and all other human rights lawyers and defenders in Crimea and Russia;
- d. ensure that all lawyers in Crimea and Russia can carry out their professional duties and activities without fear of reprisals, physical violence or other human rights violations; and
- e. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.