



Heidi HAUTALA

Chairwoman of Subcommittee on Human Rights
Member of the European Parliament

Dear Prosecutor General,

I am writing to You to express my deep concern of the case of Aleksei Sokolov, who has been in detention since 13 May 2009 and whose trial is scheduled to begin today, 19 January 2010.

I have followed the case closely from the start and have expressed my concern over his conditions in prison and the irregularities of the court proceedings already before. For example, in violation of Russian law Mr Sokolov was illegally detained, most obviously, between 7 November and 25 December 2009 as the Court order on his pre-trial detention had expired on 6 November. Moreover, the decision of a judge of the Leninski District Court, made on 2 November, to extend the pre-trial detention was made without Mr Sokolov's lawyers being present. It seems to me that also the charges against him are ill-founded and circumstances taken on the whole insufficient to justify such a long pre-trial detention.

I met with the family and lawyer of Mr Sokolov in Yekaterinburg during my official visit to Russia on 12-15 December 2009 and discussed the case in detail with them and was concerned to learn of the conditions of his imprisonment. My requests to meet also with Mr Sokolov were unsuccessful, despite this request having been endorsed by Ombudsperson of the Russian Federation Mr Vladimir Lukin. In my capacity as the Chairwoman of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights I will continue to monitor both his situation and his trial closely.

It seems that there have been considerable violations of the criminal procedure and it is my grave concern that Mr Sokolov will not receive a fair trial. I should point out here that Amnesty International has stated that Mr Sokolov might be a prisoner of conscience, and that he might be detained as a result of the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression in the course of his lawful human rights activities.

For these reasons I urge the authorities to release Mr Sokolov on bail and ensure that he will be given a fair trial in line with international standards. While in custody I call the authorities to ensure that he is not ill-treated or tortured.

Yours,

Heidi Hautala,

Chairwoman of European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights