



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE – COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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Russian Federation: end harassment of leading human rights lawyer

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today called on the Russian Prosecutor General's Office to drop disbarment proceedings against leading Russian human rights lawyer and ICJ Commissioner Karinna Mosaklenko.

The ICJ expressed its serious concern at the disbarment proceedings, which are to be heard before the Moscow Bar Association tomorrow. The proceedings relate to Ms Moskalkenko's representation of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former head of the Yukos oil firm.

"The attempt to disbar Ms Moskalkenko is without any credible grounds and appears designed to obstruct the work of one of Russia's most effective human rights lawyers" said Nicholas Howen, Secretary-General of the ICJ "Most worryingly, it forms part of a pattern of harassment of Ms Moskalkenko and her colleagues which calls into question the Russian authorities' respect for the rule of law."

The disbarment proceedings, initiated by the Prosecutor General's office, are based on clearly untenable allegations that Ms Moskalkenko has failed to adequately represent Mr Khodorkovsky in the current criminal proceedings against him, by neglecting to visit him at a particular stage in the proceedings. Statements by Mr Khodorkovsky himself make clear that he did not wish for any such visit, as Ms Moskalkenko's role was to represent him before the European Court of Human Rights, not in the criminal case.

"These abusive proceedings make a mockery of the disbarment process and should not have been brought" said Nicholas Howen, "The Russian authorities should drop this case, and recognise the important role of lawyers like Ms Moskalkenko in protecting human rights and the rule of law."

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers require that lawyers must be free to perform their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference. The ICJ is concerned that this principle, which is fundamental to the rule of law, is regularly disregarded by the Russian authorities. In recent years, there have been numerous instances of harassment of lawyers representing opponents of the government or applicants in human rights cases before the European Court of Human Rights.

The current disbarment proceedings follow repeated harassment of Ms Moskalkenko and her colleagues. These include a previous attempt to disbar her, applications to the European Court of Human Rights to remove her from cases before the Court, and a tax

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

investigation which continues to threaten closure of the International Protection Centre, the human rights organisation founded by Ms Moskalenko and which is an affiliate of the ICJ.

Attempts have also been made to disbar several other lawyers representing Mr Khordorkovsky. Most recently, in February 2007, Ms Moskalenko and other lawyers representing Mr Khordorkovsky were subject to harassment at Moscow's Domodedovo airport while on their way to visit Mr Khordorkovsky in Chita, Siberia.

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