

Regarding the Recent Attacks on Carine Clément and Other Social Activists in Russia

The Facts

11 am, 13 November. Attack against **Carine Clément**, sociologist, director of the Institute of Collective Action, member of the Union of Coordinating Councils of Russia (SKS), and an activist committed to the struggle for housing rights. On her way to a public meeting of leftist movements, two young men stuck a syringe in her thigh. This was the third act of violence against Carine Clément in the past two weeks. The assaults on her begin on 24 October, on the eve of the interregional action Day of Popular Rage, which saw the participation of movements from some forty cities in Russia in an expression of solidarity in the fight for social rights. Since 2005, Carine has actively supported, both as a sociologist and an activist, the development of independent social, civic and trade union initiatives in Russia.

Early morning, 13 November. The battered body of **Mikhail Beketov**, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Khimkinskaya Pravda* and leader of the movement to save the Khimki Forest (Moscow Region), was found in the courtyard of his building. He is now fighting for his life in the intensive care ward of the local hospital. For the past two years he has been fighting against the destruction of forests and illegal building construction, as well as against local official corruption.

6.45 pm, 13 November. Attempted attack on **Sergei Fedotov**, leader of a group supporting disenfranchised small landowners in the suburbs of Moscow. He was attacked by two young men with baseball bats and pepper spray. He managed to escape in his car. For the past five years, activists from this movement have carried out a fight to re-establish property rights to land plots that were stolen after being fraudulently privatized.

1 am, 14 November. **Alexei Etmanov**, chair of the independent trade union at the Ford plant in the Petersburg region was attacked for the second time in one week. Prepared for the attack, and with the help of several trade union comrades who were escorting him, he managed to stop the assault against him—with an iron bar—and to detain one of the assailants, who was turned over to police. Alexei is one of the founders of the new Ford trade union, which carried out the longest, most massive strike in recent Russian history, during November-December 2007.

A Quick Analysis

These facts are shocking since they coincide in time and touch people from different parts of the activist community in Russia. However, they illustrate the tendency in the last months of using criminal methods to solve social conflicts. Hundreds of more or less unknown activists, working to fight corruption and secure housing, labor, environmental or land rights, have been victimized by these methods in many regions of Russia.

Yet many of them are not opponents of the regime, and most of them are not even political activists. They are citizens who set down the path of activism to re-establish equity and the equality of all before the law, to encourage self-respect and defend violated collective rights. The moneyed interests and political forces they struggle against have begun to fight back. This means that the increasing wave of popular resistance cannot be contained only by a corrupted law enforcement system, the selective application of judicial power or the smear campaigns of the media. This also shows the degree to which the Russian socio-political system has entered into decline: it is hypercentralized, lacks real political opposition, does not allow for the possibility of real grassroots control, and is consumed by massive corruption where the notion that “everything is allowed” has (again) become the rule.

The reaction to these assaults has been huge in Russia itself: various measures, including the organization of meetings and petition drives, have been taken by the activist community. Below, you will find the translation of a petition initiated by the Union of Coordinating Councils (SKS).

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<http://ikd.ru/node/7846>

End the Terror Against Social Activists in Russia!

Public Statement on the Attacks against Social Activists

Recently, criminal attacks against the leaders of trade union and social movements have clearly increased. Among the latest such incidents, we should note the attacks against Carine Clément, a member of the working group and a leader of the Union of Coordinating Councils; Alexei Etmanov, leader of the labor union at Ford-Vsevolozhsk; Mikhail Beketov, leader of the movement to defend the Khimki Forest; and Sergei Fedotov, leader of the deceived land shareholders of the Moscow Region. In addition, a great many activists fighting the infill construction that is happening in all our cities have been attacked. There have been murders, in particular, of antifascist activists.

This is not a random phenomenon, but a clear trend: active citizens who try to restore justice and defend their legal rights are more and more often subjected to brute force. With no other arguments at its disposal, the opposite resorts to criminal methods. While it is clear that in each situation it is a different group of people who commissions these crimes, the overall tendency demonstrates that excellent conditions for the further escalation of this brutal method of “social dialogue” have been created in Russia today. These conditions include lawlessness, the lack of criminal liability for violations of the law by state officials or members of the ruling elite, universal corruption, and the hypercentralization of authority in the absence of any form of control from below. Many cases of “political” attacks on activists have still not been investigated, and the guilty parties not be found, which gives the assailants a sense of impunity and thus provokes

further crimes.

We say, Enough!

We demand a maximally thorough and swift investigation of all assaults against all social activists, the transfer of these cases into a separate category, and the creation of a special investigative group within the Ministry of the Interior. We also demand that the public be kept informed about the course of these investigations.

We demand that the assailants be punished according to law whatever high-ranking patrons might support them.

We declare that we will not be intimidated by the method of violence and terror. We will continue our struggle for the social rights of our country's citizens.

We appeal to the state authorities, who position themselves as the guarantee of "public order," to make sure that "public order" is not violated by government officials. As it is, all we observe now is the arrests of old women and young activists at various assemblies, demonstrations or strikes, while we hear very little about arrests of corrupt state officials or unscrupulous employers. Down with this politics of double standards!

We declare that, given the situation, we consider it our right to use methods of self-defense and that we will use all possible means to assist and protect our comrades.

14 November 2008

Union of Coordinating Councils of Russia (SKS): Izhevsk, Perm, Tiumen, Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnoobsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Astrakhan, Kurgan, Moscow Region, Surgut, Kaliningrad, Saratov, Samara, Penza, etc. (There are twenty-seven regional coordinating councils in all.)

This statement has been supported (as of November 17) by the following organizations:

Left Front

Vpered Socialist Movement

Defense of Labor Trade Union Alliance

Saratov People's Housing Forum

The Anarchists of Sergiev Posad

The Locals of Defense, the United Workers Union of Kurgan

Workers Democracy

The Novosibirsk Branch of AKM (Avant-Garde of the Red Youth)
The Federation of Russian Trade Unions
The Russian Federation of Air Traffic Controllers
The Civic Initiatives Movement (Saint Petersburg)
The Siberian Labor Confederation
The Tselinnoe Branch of the CPRF; the Tselinnoe Branch of the Russian Federation Communist Youth League; the Tselinnoe Branch of Russia's Hope, the All-Russia Women's Union (Altai Krai)
The Zalesovo Branch of the CPRF; the Zalesovo Branch of the Communist Youth League; the Zalesovo Branch of the Peasants Front
Union of Social Organizations of the Residents of Strogino (Moscow)
The Sparrow Hills Committee for Local Social Self-Government
Revolutionary Front (Zagorsk)
The Movement to Defend the Khimki Forest (Khimki, Moscow Oblast)
The Collective of the Internet Portal Dvizh.org (*The Movement*)
The Udmurtia Civic Actions Coordinating Council; the Movement of House Committees of Izhevsk; the Udmurtia Republic Public Council of Pensioners
V.V. Suchkov, the chair of Our Own Home, an association of home owner societies (Sochi); the Center for the Defense of Constitutional Rights and Freedoms of Citizens (Sochi)
The Altai Branch of the AKM
SoDeistvie (*Assistance*)
The Penza Branch of For Human Rights; the Penza Municipal Ecology Club; the Penza Oblast Working Group of the Russian Section of the ISHR; the Penza Regional Branch of the Union for Chemical Safety
The Anti-Fascist Union
Our City (Kaliningrad)
The Leningrad Organization of the AKM (Saint Petersburg)
Liberty, the Samara Civil Rights Information Agency (Alexander Lashmankin, Leonid Chuchman)
Revolutionary Workers Party
Dormitories Movement of Moscow and Moscow Oblast
Left Front-Komi

We ask all networks, movements, and initiative groups to support our appeal. You may send your collective or individual signature to: info@ikd.ru