

Petition Demands Justice for Beaten Activist

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A group of prominent journalists, politicians, and citizen activists in St. Petersburg have signed a petition demanding that a case against human rights activist Grigory Solominsky be dropped.

Solominsky was detained after an apparent clash with police on October 9. A group of men in plain clothes, believed to be officers of a regional St. Petersburg police department, had blocked off access to the Khasansky market complex. When Solominsky asked them for official identification, he was beaten into a concussion, thrown into a car without police license plates, and taken to the 13th Police Precinct.

Although the beating was captured on video, prosecutors have refused to initiate criminal proceedings against the police. Instead, a suit was brought against Solominsky, charging him with “public insult of a representative of authority.” The charge carries a sentence of 6 months to 1 year of remedial labor. Police have placed Solominsky under house arrest.

“Petersburg authorities, obviously,” he says, “have decided to deal with the oppositionists who have long annoyed them.”

Signatories of the petition include writer Vladimir Bukovsky, politician Boris Nemtsov, political analyst Andrei Piontkovsky, Right Cause member Boris Nadezhdin, journalist Vladimir Kara-Murza, Cato Institute senior fellow Andrei Illarionov, Yabloko member Yevgeniya Dildendorf, Solidarity executive director Denis Bilunov, Solidarity member Sergei Davidis, and many others.

According to the petition, Solominsky had previously been detained for distributing books written by Bukovsky, a Soviet political dissident, and for organizing an “unsanctioned” rally of businessmen.

Police abuse is notorious in Russia. A recent study estimated that [1 in 25 people are tortured, beaten, or harassed by law enforcement officials](#) in Russia each year. An activist in the city of Voronezh claims he was [abducted and tortured by police](#) on October 31 as a result of his participation in opposition activities.