

## **Press-release: Free Evgeny Konyshev!**

*International campaign in support of Evgeny starts on December 16, 2011*

On December 16 2011 the trial against Evgeny Konyshev's is set to resume in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Evgeny is a human rights activist representing community of drug users, as well as a volunteer in a local harm reduction project. The same day we are launching an international campaign in support of Evgeny!

### **Revenge for stating the evidence in public**

Invited to take part in a TV talk-show Evgeny Konyshev fearlessly accused representatives of the Yekaterinburg 'City without Drugs' (CwD) Foundation – Evgeny Roizman, Evgeny Malenkin and Mikhail Polutorny – of their involvement in torturing drug users in the so-called 'rehabilitation centers'. He held CwD managers to be responsible for the cruel and degrading treatment of drug users disguised as treatment and rehabilitation. Having undergone such 'rehabilitation' most of the 'patients' soon returned to drug use, broken mentally and emotionally.

This open accusation did not go unpunished for Konyshev: Members of 'City without Drugs,' supported by local police, planted on him 2.72 grams of an unknown substance that in his court case is referred to as 'heroin'. It should be noted that Mikhail Polutorny – a CwD staff member who took part in the talk show– was in charge of the whole operation and later appeared in the criminal proceedings protocols as an identifying witness.

Despite blatant violations of the law upon arrest and during preliminary hearings, Evgeny Konyshev continues to remain behind bars. The fact that Evgeny is accused of drug possession and is a drug user himself (and thus allegedly dangerous!) was enough for the judge to place him in pre-trial detention. In other words, Konyshev was detained on the grounds of his drug use – the only disease in Russia that is addressed by severe punishment instead of treatment. According to Russia's penal code, 2.72 grams of a substance containing at least one molecule of heroin is interpreted as 'extra large quantity' of a narcotic drug, and Konyshev is facing up to 10 years in prison.

The judge systematically ignores all arguments of the defense and turns a blind eye to every demand and motion passed by Evgeny's lawyer in response to multiple gross violations in the case proceedings. Konyshev is held in detention because in Russia, a country with acute narcophobia, a drug user is devoid of presumption of innocence, with about 99.9% of all drug cases ending in convictions.

### **The case of Evgeny Konyshev**

On February 24, 2011, Russian federal network NTV broadcasted an episode of the popular talk-show, The Final Word. The episode was entitled 'My son is a monster', where several people openly spoke about kidnappings and torture practiced by 'City without Drugs.' Among the speakers was Evgeny Konyshev, who told his story.

In 2001 Evgeny's friends brought him to 'City without Drugs', pretending that they were taking him to see a psychologist. Upon arrival he was placed in a cold room, and the humiliation began. There was the flogging: face down on the bed, pants down, 2-3 people beating him with belts until his skin went black. The lashing was not regarded as punishment: it was part of a standard treatment for everyone, an initiation of sorts. And this was not the only torture tactic employed by CwD. Konyshev managed to escape from this 'rehabilitation', and he never thought of coming back. Yet he found the strength to describe his experiences in the talk-show.

On April 23, 2011, Evgeny's friend asked to help with buying drugs for shared use. Evgeny agreed unaware that this was a setup by the CwD. Even so, circumstances were such that he didn't buy the drugs. Nevertheless, he was detained. When it became evident that he didn't have any drugs on him, people in charge of the setup planted drugs on him, saying 'It's only fair'. A witness saw it and had later testified. Another truthful testimony was given by that friend of Evgeny who had been forced by the CwD to participate in the setup.

This was revenge. Pay-back from the 'City without Drugs' and a 'message' for those who might want to speak up in the future against such torture 'experts' who are exploiting the problem of drug use in Russia.

The trial began in October of 2011, but from the attitudes of the investigator, the prosecutor and the judge it seems almost certain that Evgeny will be convicted. Here's one fact: for no obvious reasons the case has been postponed three times for periods from one week to two months, while the accused remained and still remains in custody on groundless charges. We must speak up in his support! Evgeny Konyshev should be acquitted and released!

### **Evgeny Konyshev: one of hundreds of thousands**

In his column 'Jailbirds' in the Russian weekly *The New Times* (Issue 27, 29.08.2011), Mikhail Khodorkovsky notes that nearly half of Russian inmates are serving prison sentences "for the so-called 'people's article' – for possession of drugs".

Evgeny Konyshev is just one of hundreds of thousands of victims suffering from Russia's repressive drug policies, characterized by corruption among law enforcement officials, framing as a method of criminal prosecution, incompetence and neglect by health workers, and anti-drug campaigns rooted in propaganda instead of ongoing information and education.

Konyshev's case in itself is a verdict for the current judicial system in Russia as a whole. It can no longer continue, it is a dead-end destination. For that reason, on December 16, 2011, the day Evgeny's trial is set to resume, we are launching an international campaign in his support. We demand a fair trial! Free Evgeny Konyshev!

### **Contact information:**

Ekaterinburg – Ludmila Vins, 'Chance Plus', +7 909 0032266  
email: [pin.ekb@yandex.ru](mailto:pin.ekb@yandex.ru)

Moscow – Anya Sarang, Andrey Rylkov Foundation, +7 926 8708518  
email: [anyasarang@gmail.com](mailto:anyasarang@gmail.com) skype: anyasarang

Berlin – Alexander Delphinov, poet and journalist, +49 179 9186381  
email: [delphinoff@gmail.com](mailto:delphinoff@gmail.com)