

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead denouncing the detention of journalist Vladimir Chugunov.

30 March 2007

His Excellency Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation
Office of the President
4 Staraya Square, the Kremlin
Moscow 103132
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E-mail: president@gov.ru

Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing to protest the detention of journalist **Vladimir Chugunov**.

According to our information, Chugunov, an editor for the independent weekly *Chugunka*, has been held in psychiatric detention since 21 January 2007. On that day, Chugunov was summoned to police headquarters in Solnechnogorsk, 64 kilometres north-west of Moscow, allegedly as a witness in a robbery case, but was then jailed. Policemen confiscated back issues of *Chugunka* at his home. The robbery charge was eventually changed to "causing deliberate health damage," a criminal indictment that carries up to eight years in prison. Chugunov was then sent to a mental hospital.

Authorities told Chugunov's sister Anna Zuyeva, who has been denied visitation rights, that the charge against her brother changed once again, this time to "threat to murder or cause serious health damage," a criminal charge that carries up to two years in prison.

Chugunov has been "quarantined" and is held in isolation, leading to increased concern for his well-being.

Chugunov, a 2002 recipient of the prestigious Sakharov award for his journalism—a prize named after Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov and given to those who work in defence of human rights and civil liberties—wrote a series of articles critical of local administration. In July 2002, attackers beat Chugunov and broke his right hand, saying, "Here you go now, writer, write if you can!,"

PEN Canada is deeply concerned for the wellbeing of Vladimir Chugunov, whom it believes may be held in violation of his right to freedom of expression. We are alarmed at his incarceration in a psychiatric hospital. PEN Canada calls for his immediate release as a matter of urgency.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Copies to:

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Human Rights Ombudsmen
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Please send copies of your appeal to the following Canadian authorities:

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