

SCHOLARS AT RISK

N E T W O R K

Mr. Dmitri Medvedev
President of the Russian Federation
Ilinka Str, 23
Moscow, 103132
Russian Federation

October 26, 2010

RE: Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev

Your Excellency:

I am writing on behalf of the Scholars at Risk Network to express concern over international reports that Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev, professors at Baltic State Technical University in St. Petersburg have been detained since March, without a trial or formal charges issued against them. We respectfully urge you to reconsider the professors' arrests and ensure their well-being pending their earlier release, including ensuring regular access to legal counsel of their choosing, to family and to medical treatment.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is an international network of over 240 universities and colleges in 29 countries dedicated to promoting academic freedom and its constituent freedoms of thought, opinion, expression, association and travel. In cases like Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev's involving alleged infringement of these freedoms, Scholars at Risk investigates hoping to clarify and resolve matters favorably.

According to international reports, Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev, professors at Baltic State Technical University in St. Petersburg, Russia, were arrested on March 16, 2010. The professors have reportedly been accused of spying and passing state secrets to unidentified Chinese citizens. The accusations stem from a cooperative relationship Baltic State Technical University has with Harbin Engineering University in China, which allowed the professors to give lectures at the Chinese university. According to the chairman of Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev's academic department, the lectures they gave did not contain state secrets.

SAR understands that Professors Bobyshev and Afanasyev have been detained without charge since March at Moscow's Lefortovo maximum-security prison. In September 2010, the Lefortovsky district court extended the professors' pretrial detention for an additional four months to allow the Federal Security Service officers to better prepare their case. The indefinite pretrial detention of Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev without formal charges seemingly contravenes international standards of due process, fair trial and detention procedures, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Russia is a signatory.

The sudden arrest of Professors Bobyshev and Afanasyev without a clear basis for their detention raises grave concerns about the ability of scholars, scientists and intellectuals to safely work in and visit Russia. This consideration, combined with the numerous reports of arrests of scientists throughout Russia, many who are reportedly held for years without formal charges or trial,

suggests a wider attempt to intimidate intellectuals and to limit academic freedom in Russia, a suggestion Scholars at Risk finds particularly distressing and unfortunate.

We therefore join with national and international academic and scientific associations, human rights organizations and individual scholars in respectfully urging you to examine the circumstances of Svyatoslav Bobyshev and Yevgeny Afanasyev's arrest and detention. We respectfully urge you to intervene to ensure their well-being pending their earliest release, including ensuring regular access to legal counsel of their choosing, family and medical treatment.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Quinn
Executive Director

Cc:

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