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Statement

«We Demand to Stop Persecution of Lawyers and Jurists in the Republic of Crimea»

The General Council of the International Association of Russian Advocates (Association Internationale d'Avocats Russes, Strasbourg) expresses its protest in connection with the flagrant facts of pressure, illegal searches, and interference in the professional activities of lawyers (advocates) Emil Kurbedinov and Edem Semedlyaev, as well as jurists Elvina Semedlyaeva, Lilia Gemedzhi, Nazim Sheikhmambetov, and Rustem Kyamilev in the Republic of Crimea.

On December 11, 2025, employees of the Center for Combating Extremism (CPE) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Republic of Crimea, supported by armed special forces personnel, conducted coordinated raids on the offices of lawyers and human rights defenders.

At approximately 10:30 AM at the address: Simferopol, Lenina St., 14, apt. 8 (human rights office), and later, at approximately 2:45 PM at the address: Simferopol, Vorovskogo St., 17, office 3/3 (lawyers' office), illegal searches were effectively carried out under the guise of an operational-search activity titled «examination of premises, buildings, structures, terrain areas, and vehicles». Similar activities were also carried out on the same day at the workplace of the bar association's accountant.

During these activities, police officers under the leadership of the head of the CPE, Lieutenant Colonel Ruslan Shambazov, grossly violated the fundamental guarantees of the independence of the legal profession. Agreements for the provision of legal assistance containing attorney-client privilege, warrants and their counterfoils, as well as lawyer seal were seized. Furthermore, items and documents were photographed on the personal phones of police officers, and information in the mobile phones of the lawyers was examined. During the raid, the lawyers and jurists were in the position of effectively detained persons; they were prohibited from leaving the premises and communicating freely by phone.

On December 11, 2025, at approximately 11:00 AM, lawyer Kurbedinov arrived at the human rights office to provide legal assistance to the persons inside; however, police officers refused to allow him entry, stating that he was «late for the event». As a result, lawyer Kurbedinov was restricted in his ability to provide qualified legal assistance to Edem Semedlyaev, Nazim Sheikhmambetov, Lilia Gemedzhi, and Rustem Kyamilev.

On December 11, 2025, lawyer Edem Semedlyaev arrived at the lawyers' office to provide legal assistance to the persons inside, but police officers refused to allow him entry. Consequently, lawyer Semedlyaev was restricted in his ability to provide qualified legal assistance to lawyer Kurbedinov.

Regarding two of the three de facto searches performed, the participating lawyers and jurists were not provided with all necessary copies of procedural documents (court order and the report of the activity) by police officers.

Representatives of the Chamber of Lawyers of the Republic of Crimea were not involved in the de facto searches.

During the activities, police officers exceeded their powers and the prescriptions of judicial acts, gaining access to the bar association's banking secrets by forcing the organization's accountant to log into the «bank-client» system and copying confidential financial information regarding clients.

The actions to authorize and conduct the search are currently being appealed.

The formal basis for the intrusion into the lawyers' office, the human rights office, and the workplace of the bar association's accountant were orders issued by the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea, Judge V.N. Sklyarov, dated December 9, 2025.

These documents claim that lawyers Kurbedinov and Semedlyaev are «possibly involved» in activities provided for by Articles 205.5 (organization of the activities of a terrorist organization and participation in the activities of such an organization), 205.1 (assistance to terrorist activity), and 199 (tax evasion) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

By sanctioning a de facto search without taking into account any provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation and with selective consideration of the norms of the Federal Law «On Advocacy and the Legal Profession in the Russian Federation», the court, in its order, relied on the unsubstantiated assertion of police officers that «paper and electronic information carriers confirming the fact of their possible illegal activity, as well as objects, products, and substances withdrawn from civil circulation, may be stored» in the premises of the human rights office and the lawyers office.

Furthermore, the text of the court order indicates that it sanctions only an examination, but not the seizure of any objects or documents from the premises subjected to the de facto search. The order contains no instructions regarding the de facto detention of lawyers and jurists. At the same time, in the descriptive-motivational part of its order, the court, contrary to the requirements of the law, does not specify the concrete objects sought, but only abstractly mentions «paper and electronic information carriers», which effectively allowed police officers to carry out the arbitrary seizure of any objects and documents at their own discretion. Lawyer Asan Seityagyaev, whose agreements were seized by the police, was not mentioned in the court order at all.

Significant data in the court order (order number, position, full name of the judge who issued the order (in two places), registration number and date of the order to initiate a petition for an operational-search activity by the Deputy Chief of Police (for operational work) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Republic of Crimea, Police Colonel D.I. Nesterov, and the number of days during which the operational-search activity may be conducted) were entered into the text of the orders by hand, while the main text of the order was prepared in printed form, and the court seal on the orders is illegible. This gives grounds to assert that the actual preparation of the content and text of the order was carried out not by the court, but by third parties.

This also indicates that the court, at the very least, did not carry out an independent and sufficient legal assessment of the nature and actual existence of grounds for sanctioning interference in the activities of lawyers and jurists by police officers, but merely formally legitimized the initiative of individual officials of the internal affairs bodies, which contradicts both Russian and international legal standards and standards of effective judicial control over law enforcement activities.

Attention should also be drawn to the fact that charging lawyers with the same articles under which they defend their clients, without providing any concrete facts of their personal criminal activity, is a direct violation of the principle of the inadmissibility of identifying lawyers with their clients and their interests. This, in turn, testifies to the unlawful persecution of lawyers and human rights jurists for their professional activities and an unjustified attempt by police officers of the Republic of Crimea to criminalize the provision of qualified legal assistance, which contradicts international standards and the legislation of the Russian Federation.

The actions of the law enforcement agencies and the court that sanctioned them violated the following fundamental legal acts:

1. Violations of the Constitution of the Russian Federation:

- **Article 18 (meaning, content, and application of laws):** human and civil rights and freedoms are directly applicable; they determine the meaning, content, and application of laws and the activities of the legislative and executive authorities and are ensured by justice, whereas the police and the court acted contrary to this prescription.
- **Article 22 (right to freedom and personal inviolability):** the de facto holding of lawyers and jurists in blocked premises without charges being brought or detention reports being drawn up is an arbitrary restriction of freedom.
- **Article 48 (right to qualified legal assistance):** police officers grossly restricted the right of persons de facto detained in the offices to receive legal assistance by refusing to admit lawyers Kurbedinov and Semedlyaev to the sites of the operational-search activities at different times during the

same day. Blocking communications and the physical denial of access for lawyers to their clients and the site of the activities nullified the constitutional guarantee of the right to receive qualified legal assistance and violated the professional rights of lawyers.

- **Article 120 (independence of judges):** The issuance of groundless orders by Judge Sklyarov on forms prepared in advance by police officers, by filling in pre-designated fields of the forms by hand, indicates a formal approach that excludes the real administration of justice.

2. Violations of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation:

- **Article 450.1 (specifics of conducting a search regarding the lawyer):** a search as an investigative action was effectively replaced by the operational-search activity «examination of premises, buildings, structures, terrain areas, and vehicles» without a criminal case being initiated and without compliance with the guarantees of legal activity provided by law, which constitutes a circumvention of the requirements of the law. The requirement for the mandatory presence of a representative of the Chamber of Lawyers during a search of lawyers was ignored. The legal requirement to specify concrete objects sought and the legal prohibition on seizing objects not directly provided for were bypassed. The legal requirement to conduct investigative actions only within the framework of an initiated criminal case was bypassed. The illegal seizure of materials containing attorney-client privilege (files, agreements), the photographing of data on the personal phones of police officers, and the copying of information from the bar association's bank account were carried out.

3. Violations of the Federal Law «On Advocacy and the Legal Profession in the Russian Federation»:

- **Articles 2, 6 (legal practice, rights of the lawyer):** the lawyer has the right to provide consultations on legal issues, participate as a defense counsel, and perform other actions not contradicting the law, which lawyers Kurbedinov and Semedlyayev were prohibited from doing by police officers.
- **Article 8 (attorney-client privilege):** direct interference in the confidential «attorney-client» relationship through the seizure of agreements, warrants, and warrant counterfoils.
- **Article 18 (guarantees of lawyer independence):** interference in the activities of an lawyer and their identification with the client through statements about the alleged involvement of lawyers in committing crimes qualified under Articles 205.5 and 205.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, under which they are providing defense.

4. Violations of the Federal Law «On Operational-Search Activity»:

- **Article 5 (observance of human and civil rights):** rights to privacy, personal and family secrets, inviolability of the home, and privacy of correspondence were violated during the raid on the offices of lawyers and human rights defender jurists.
- **Article 6 (types of operational-search activities):** there was an exceeding of the limits of the sanctioned operational-search activity «examination of premises, buildings, structures, terrain areas, and vehicles». Police officers illegally obtained access to banking secrets and computer information through the «bank-client» system, which required a separate type of operational-search activity (obtaining computer information) and a special judicial sanction for its conduct.
- **Article 9 (motivation of a judicial decision sanctioning operational-search activities):** The absence in the court order of any data justifying the sanctioning of the operational-search activity, other than the unsubstantiated and groundless assertion of the «possible involvement» of the lawyers in crimes, and the court's ignorance of the requirements of international standards of the independence of the bar and lawyers, criminal procedure legislation, and legislation on the bar and legal practice, renders the court order unmotivated and illegal.

5. Violations of the «United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers»:

- **Principles 16, 18, 22:** The government of the Russian Federation failed to ensure conditions under which lawyers can perform their functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment, or improper interference. The identification of lawyers with their clients and unauthorized access to documents and information constituting attorney-client privilege are gross violations of these international standards.

6. Violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

- **Article 5 (prohibition of activities aimed at the restriction of rights):** the actions of the court and police officers, in their entirety, led to the rights guaranteed by the Covenant, the Constitution, and the legislation of the Russian Federation not being properly observed and implemented.

- **Article 7 (prohibition of torture and humiliating treatment):** the use of armed masked special forces during the activities, which was not necessitated by the circumstances, to exert psychological pressure on lawyers and jurists is regarded as treatment humiliating to human dignity and bore the character of intimidation.
- **Article 9 (right to liberty and security of person):** the prohibition on lawyers and jurists leaving the premises where the activities were conducted, as well as the prohibition on their use of mobile phones, is equivalent to de facto detention, which is an arbitrary restriction of freedom, given that such actions were not properly sanctioned and were not justified by an immediate threat or specific charges against them. The court order concerned the examination of premises but did not sanction de facto detention, deprivation of the right to freedom of movement, or the use of mobile phones. The restriction of freedom was not individualized, was not based on specific suspicions regarding each person, and bore a collective and arbitrary character.
- **Article 14 (right to counsel):** The arbitrary prohibition on the admission of lawyers to participate in the ongoing procedural actions led to a de facto prohibition on lawyers Semedlyaev and Kurbedinov providing qualified legal assistance to the lawyers and jurists against whom the activities were being conducted, and to a violation of the professional rights of lawyers.
- **Article 17 (protection against arbitrary interference with privacy):** police officers carried out disproportionate interference — intrusion into offices, examination of personal mobile phones, and documents of lawyers and jurists without sufficient legal grounds. An intrusion was carried out into the private lives of the lawyers' clients, with whom the lawyers had concluded confidential agreements that were seized by police officers.
- **Article 22 (freedom of association):** the persecution is aimed at the destruction of an informal human rights association of lawyers and jurists. The use of anti-terrorist legislation to suppress human rights activities violates the right to freedom of association.

We regard the events of December 11, 2025, as an act of intimidation of the entire legal community specializing in the protection of human rights and as an attempt to paralyze the work of independent lawyers and jurists.

Based on the foregoing, the General Council of the International Association of Russian Advocates proposes:

1. To immediately cease the illegal persecution of lawyers Emil Kurbedinov and Edem Semedlyaev and the jurists of the human rights office Elvina Semedlyaeva, Lilia Gemedzhi, Nazim Sheikhmambetov, and Rustem Kyamilev in connection with their professional activities.
2. To conduct a thorough and independent investigation into the actions of the employees of the Center for Combating Extremism of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Republic of Crimea, in particular, Police Lieutenant Colonel R. Shambazov and Police Captain R. Filatov, regarding the abuse of their official powers in organizing the illegal raid on the offices of lawyers and jurists for the purpose of obstructing their lawful professional activities in protecting the constitutional rights of humans and citizens.
3. To conduct an inspection regarding the Judge of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Crimea, V.N. Sklyarov, in connection with his issuance of knowingly unlawful orders violating the constitutional rights of citizens and the guarantees of legal activity.
4. To immediately return all documents and information carriers constituting attorney-client privilege that were illegally seized during the raid on December 11, 2025.
5. To ensure compliance in the Republic of Crimea with international standards in the field of human rights and the independence of the bar, excluding the practice of identifying lawyers and jurists with their clients and to cease groundless attempts to criminalize their lawful professional activities.

General Council of the International Association of Russian Advocates