*Defending Human Rights Defender Programme, London 22-25 February 2012*
*Musa Khasanov, EHRAC/Memorial HRC*

**RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE**

**3 main groups of key threats against human rights activists**

1. *General pressure on human rights NGO*
(i) prolonged unscheduled revisions of the accountant offices, which makes it difficult for an organisation to operate;
(ii) unlawful closure of the organisation's bank account, which can be successfully challenged before the courts but takes time and most of the activities are being suspended due to the lack of funds;
(iii) unlawful search in the offices and seizure of documents and hard drives of computers.

2. *Direct threats towards human rights defenders (HRD)*
(i) conversations, phone calls, text messages with demands to stop certain activities;
(ii) misuse of state intelligence against HRD (e.g., surveillance);
(iii) unfounded lengthy criminal proceedings against HRD.

3. *Indirect pressure on HRD*
(i) complaints of 'unsolicited' behavior of HRD (if they are licensed lawyers) to Bar associations;
(ii) systematic stigmatisation of HRD by local authorities via public sources (TV, press, etc.);
(iii) threat towards persons who applied to the human rights NGO for assistance.

**Strategies for solidarity**
1. Negotiations/dialogues with state officials:
(i)  meetings, round-tables with state officials organised via Ombudsman office.

2. Immediate reaction if HRD is being arrested/ disappeared:
(i) phone calls, faxes to the relevant domestic authorities with request to urgent actions;
(ii) appeal to the Russian Ombudsman to make phone calls to the relevant authorities;
(iii) application to international bodies such as office of UN Special representative on human rights defenders.

3. Wide publicity of any threats towards HRD via press and/or by requesting domestic authorities to undertake certain actions.

4. Seminars on personal and information security:
(i) rehabilitation seminars for staff;
(ii) developing skills on how to communicate safely (Skype, protected emails, etc.), how to encrypt and keep data and other skills.

5. Temporary relocation of HRD to another region/country