



**Day of the Imprisoned Writer 2018  
TAKE ACTION FOR OLEG SENTSOV  
RUSSIA  
Writer, filmmaker**

15 November 2018

Ukrainian writer and filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, is serving a 20-year prison sentence on spurious terrorism charges after a grossly unfair trial by a Russian military court, marred by allegations of torture. He is currently being held in the 'Polar Bear' penal colony of Labytnangi, in Siberia, thousands of kilometres away from his home and family in Crimea. He recently spent 145 days on hunger strike, calling for the release of all Ukrainian prisoners imprisoned in Russia on politically motivated grounds. He ended his strike on 6 October 2018 as he feared being forced-fed.

PEN International believes that Oleg Sentsov was imprisoned for his opposition to Russia's occupation and illegal 'annexation' of Crimea and calls on the Russian authorities to release him immediately. The organisation further calls on the Russian authorities to respect Oleg Sentsov's human rights, including the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, and his right to medical attention.

**Take Action – Share on Twitter, Facebook and other social media**

Please send appeals to the Russian authorities urging them to:

- Release Oleg Sentsov immediately;
- Respect Oleg Sentsov's human rights, including the prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, and his right to medical attention;
- Return all Ukrainian nationals arrested in Crimea and now held in Russia to Ukraine, as required by international law, and free all held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

**Send appeals to:**

**President of the Russian Federation**

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin  
Ul.Ilyinka, 23  
103132 Moscow  
Russian Federation

Electronic copies can also be sent to: <http://letters.kremlin.ru/letters/send>

**Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation**

Yuri Yakovlevich Chaika

Prosecutor General's Office  
ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a  
125993 Moscow GSP- 3  
Russian Federation

### **Human Rights Ombudsman of the Russian Federation**

Tatiana Nikolaevna Moskalkova  
ul. Miasnitskaia, 47  
107084, Moscow  
Russian Federation

Send copies to the Embassy of Russia in your own country. Embassy addresses may be found here: <https://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-of/russia>

We also encourage you to reach out to your Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic representatives in Russia, calling on them to raise Oleg Sentsov's case in bilateral fora.

### **Send a message of support**

The amount of support Oleg Sentsov received during his hunger strike was staggering. We are grateful to everyone who sent him messages of solidarity and would like to encourage you to keep writing to him. After this hunger strike, and the [toll it has taken on his health](#), we are sure he needs our support now more than ever.

Please note that all messages need to be written in Russian. If you do not speak Russian, please find a sample message below:

Dear Oleg, I wish you good health and strength and hope that you will soon be released. We are all thinking of you and stand with you in solidarity and respect.

Дорогой Олег, желаю Вам крепкого здоровья и сил, и надеюсь, что Вы скоро будете освобождены. Мы все думаем о Вас и поддерживаем в знак солидарности и уважения.

### **Address**

Oleg Gennadievych Sentsov, Yamalo-Nenetsky autonomous okrug, Labytnangi, Severnaya St, 33, Russian Federation, 629400

629400 Ямало-Ненецкий автономный округ, город Лабытнанги, улица Северная 33, Сенцову Олегу Геннадьевичу, Россия

### **Publicity**

Oleg Sentsov's hunger strike brought considerable attention to his plight and we would like to thank everyone who took action on his case. In order to keep up the momentum, we encourage PEN members to continue to:

- Publish articles and opinion pieces in your national or local press highlighting the case of Oleg Sentsov;

- Share information about Oleg Sentsov and your campaigning activities via social media; please use #FreeSentsov;
- Organise public events, press conferences and demonstrations;
- Celebrate Oleg Sentsov's work through [film screenings](#) and [readings](#).

Please let us know about your activities and send us reports about the actions you take. This is really important as it means we can monitor the impact that our campaigning has in relation to Oleg Sentsov's case.

**Social Media:** Please use the hashtags #ImprisonedWriter and #FreeSentsov

Share information about Oleg Sentsov and your campaigning activities for him via social media.

Suggested tweets:

- .@PutinRF\_Eng, Oleg Sentsov should have never spent a single day behind bars. Release him immediately #FreeSentsov #ImprisonedWriter
- On Day of the #ImprisonedWriter join PEN and take action for imprisoned writer & filmmaker Oleg Sentsov #FreeSentsov {insert RAN link}

Russian:

- @ПутинRF\_Eng, Олег Сенцов не должен был провести ни дня за решеткой. Немедленно освободите его #FreeSentsov #ImprisonedWriter
- В День писателей-заключенных присоединитесь к ПЕН и приобщитесь к акции поддержки заключенного писателя и режиссера Олега Сенцова #ImprisonedWriter #FreeSentsov # {insert RAN link}

Ukrainian:

- @ПутинRF\_Eng, Олег Сенцов не повинен був провести за ґратами ані дня. Негайно звільніть його #FreeSentsov #ImprisonedWriter
- У День письменників за ґратами приєднайтеся до ПЕН та долучіться до акції на підтримку ув'язненого письменника і режисера Олега Сенцова #ImprisonedWriter #FreeSentsov # {insert RAN link}

## Background

Ukrainian writer and filmmaker Oleg Sentsov took part in the EuroMaidan demonstrations that toppled former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014. He helped deliver food to Ukrainian soldiers following Russia's occupation and 'annexation' of Crimea in March 2014. He said he was arrested by the Russian security services at his apartment in Crimea on 10 May 2014. He reported being subjected to a brutal three-hour ordeal involving beatings, suffocation and threats of sexual assault.

His arrest was officially recorded on 11 May 2014 on the grounds of 'suspicion of plotting terrorist acts' and membership of a terrorist group – the Ukrainian right-wing group Pravyi Sektor (Right Sector). He was taken to Russia on 23 May 2014 where he spent over a year in pre-trial detention. He was eventually charged with the establishment of a terrorist group, politically motivated arson and conspiring to blow up a statue of Lenin, all of which he denied.

Following a trial widely condemned outside of Russia, in which a key prosecution witness retracted his statement, saying it had been extracted under torture, Oleg Sentsov was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison by the military court of Rostov-on-Don on 20 August 2015. His sentence was upheld on appeal on 24 November 2015. In October 2016, the Russian authorities denied a request for extradition to Ukraine on the grounds that he had become a Russian citizen following Russia's occupation and 'annexation' of Crimea.

Oleg Sentsov began a [hunger strike](#) on 14 May 2018 to urge the Russian authorities to release all Ukrainian nationals currently imprisoned in Russia on politically motivated grounds. He was taken to intensive care on 15 June 2018. His heart and kidney problems considerably worsened and he was put on a glucose drip. In August 2018, he told his family that he had been denied access to letters and had been kept in 'an information vacuum'. The prison authorities subsequently granted him access to correspondence following an international outcry. On 5 October 2018, he wrote a [letter](#) stating that he felt compelled to end his hunger strike as he feared being forced-fed. He said he had lost 20 kilos and suffered irreparable damages to his health.

Scores of international and regional officials and organisations have called for Oleg Sentsov's immediate release, including [United Nations experts](#), the [European Parliament](#) and the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#). Svetlana Alexievitch, Tom Stoppard, Margaret Atwood, Ian Rankin, Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Stephen Fry and Yann Martel are amongst those who most recently joined PEN and [voiced their solidarity](#) with Oleg Sentsov.

Oleg Sentsov is the winner of the [2017 PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award](#) and the 2018 European Parliament's [Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought](#).

### **Freedom of expression in Russia and occupied Crimea**

For more information about the state of freedom of expression in Russia, please see PEN International, PEN Moscow and St Petersburg PEN's joint report entitled [Russia's Strident Stifling of Free Speech 2012-2018](#). The report, published in October 2018 in both [English](#) and [Russian](#), shows how Russia's array of repressive laws severely restricts the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and information. It describes the deterioration of media freedom through the Russian authorities' control of the media landscape and the immense pressure faced by independent journalists to not contradict the official line or provide coverage of critical viewpoints. It analyses the prosecution and conviction of several people on politically motivated grounds. It further shows how artistic freedom and literature are under threat.

For more information about freedom of expression in occupied Crimea, please see PEN International's report [Freedom of Expression in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: External Aggression and Internal Challenges](#), published in September 2017 in [English](#). PEN International continues to [call](#) for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Ukraine.

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