

I would like to thank Chairman Christopher Smith, Co-Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Representative Steny Hoyer and all the members and staff of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for their long-standing and active support in my case. I am grateful to the CSCE for your visit to my office in Russia and I am glad that your help allows me to be in the US today.

I also would like to thank the environmental and human rights coalition that has sustained me all these years, including Amnesty International USA, Sierra Club, Bellona USA, and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Today I'd like to discuss three issues: First, the surprising and disturbing update on my personal case. Second, the productive activities in the environmental and human rights movement, despite continued and even increasing FSB secret service harassment of human rights and environmental defenders. Third, I will cover the efforts by a coalition of ecological and human rights organizations in Russia to initiate a referendum on the proposal to import international nuclear waste into the Russian Federation.

First, my case has taken a turn for the worse. Yesterday I learned from my lawyer that the Procurator General's office (the equivalent of the Attorney General) has filed a new appeal after my acquittal by the Supreme Court this spring. A three-judge panel at the Supreme Court previously tried my case and this is an appeal to the entire Presidium, an 11-judge chamber. A new hearing of the case is scheduled for August 2 in Moscow at the Presidium of the Supreme Court. The new appeal contains absolutely no new information and asserts a desire to send my case back to the prosecutor to collect more evidence. The appeal is dated May 30 and the letter to my lawyer from the Supreme Court is dated July 11. After four and a half years, the prosecutor should already have had sufficient time to collect evidence if there is any backing for the charges against me. After losing in court four times, the prosecutor still is requesting more evidence. As far as my lawyer knows, this is the first time in post-Soviet history that a Supreme Court decision by a panel has been appealed to the entire Supreme Court Presidium.

Unfortunately my case is not the only example of the government's harassment of grassroots advocates in Russia. The FSB's persecution of environmental defenders, human rights activists, and scientists continues. I hope you will use your good offices to continue to support environmental defenders and the related rights of freedom of speech and association -- the fundamental tenets of civil society and democracy.

I want to use the more than four years of experience gathered in my case to assist others in the same situation - or better still, help them avoid getting into a situation as seemingly inextricable as mine. Despite the harassment, I very much want to continue my work in Russia, as the work is close to my heart. I continue to work for the Bellona Foundation, a Norwegian environmental

non-governmental organization. We also founded the Environmental Rights Center in St. Petersburg to address issues at the intersection of environment and human rights. Additionally, we wanted to broaden our network of support, so we established an umbrella organization, the Coalition for Environment and Human Rights, which unites and supports about 40 grassroots NGOs. The coalition is led by the environmental activists Grigory Pasko, Lev Feydorov and me. The activities of this coalition include (1) monitoring and collecting environmental and human rights information; (2) supporting environmental defenders; and (3) utilizing the experience of previous legal cases.

Recently, President Putin abolished the State Committee to Protect the Environment, the equivalent of the US Environmental Protection Agency, leaving environmentalists with even less official support than before. At the same time, the government has found other ways to harass environmental and human rights defenders, through the tax police and overly bureaucratic registration procedures.

The military journalist Grigory Pasko, who also has been invited to Washington, is not currently allowed to travel as the appeal of his acquittal is stalled in the system. Other cases of harassed activists include Nikolai Shur, who collected nuclear contamination information in the Chelyabinsk region, and the scientist Vladimir Soyfer of Vladivostok, who did research on the environmental impact of nuclear issues. Protection for environmental defenders is closely tied to freedom of speech and the press.

The government's policy of rapid resource extraction for hard currency exports turns defenders of Russia's environment into opponents of official policy, which has set off a pattern of harassment of environmental defenders. Because this is an international trade issue, the US should be just as concerned as Russia.

Another issue close to my heart is the atomic ministry's proposal to import large amounts of foreign radioactive materials into the Russian Federation for cash. A coalition of environmental and human rights groups is working to initiate a referendum to give the Russian people a voice to influence this dangerous new policy. We know from opinion polls that the vast majority of ordinary Russians is opposed to this scheme, but the government presses on.

Most of the nuclear materials are of US origin and US permission is required to transfer them to Russia. I urge you to take a stand with the Administration in support of Russia's people against nuclear waste imports, or at least hold off any US decision until the referendum indicates what the Russian people want.

I also urge United States officials to take every opportunity to raise these crucial environmental and human rights problems with Russian authorities. Thank you.