



Jill C. Pipher, PhD
President

president@ams.org
401.455.4000

January 5, 2021

Mokhov, Andrei Valeriyevich
Chairman, Golovinsky District Court
31 Zoya and Alexander Kosmonemyansky Street, apt. 2
Moscow, 125130
Russia

Dear Chairman Mokhov,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the President of the American Mathematical Society, to express concern regarding the case of Azat Miftakhov, a PhD graduate student in the Department of Mathematics and Mechanics of the Moscow State University, whose case is pending before your court and where the verdict is scheduled to be announced on January 11, 2021.

The American Mathematical Society, with over 30,000 individual members worldwide, is a professional organization dedicated to advancing mathematical research and education and connecting the diverse global mathematical community through our publications, meetings and conferences, MathSciNet, professional services, advocacy, and awareness programs. The AMS is committed to supporting the human rights of mathematicians around the world, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I am writing this letter following a recommendation of the AMS Committee on the Human Rights of Mathematicians.

According to multiple news reports, Azat Miftakhov has been held under arrest in pretrial detention in Moscow since February 2019 on a putative vandalism charge related to a protest action at the offices of the United Russia party. Apparently the only actual damage resulting from that protest consisted of a broken window. Azat Miftakhov's trial, which has been delayed multiple times, finally concluded on December 25, 2020.

The case has been heard in the Golovinsky District Court in Moscow by judge Bazarov, with the verdict now scheduled to be delivered on January 11, 2021. News reports indicate that the prosecution requested a six-year prison sentence for Miftakhov. Apparently in large part the case against Miftakhov was based on the testimony of a "secret" government witness who died several months before the trial and thus could not be cross-examined by the defense. Credible reports also indicate that Miftakhov has been subjected to considerable mistreatment and even torture while incarcerated. A Russian human organization "Memorial" recognized Azat Miftakhov as a political prisoner.

The AMS has been continuously monitoring the case of Azat Miftakhov and called that he be given a fair and transparent trial and receive humane treatment while in detention. The AMS Council issued a statement of concern in the case of Miftakhov in January 2020, affirmed at the April 2020 Council meeting.

We now ask the court to exercise leniency and compassion in its verdict in Azat Miftakhov's case and urge that, if he is found guilty, his sentence not exceed the time he has already served while awaiting trial. Surely he has already paid more than enough for whatever transgressions he may have committed in this case. Azat Miftakhov is a promising young mathematician, who recently, even while in prison, wrote two new mathematical research articles on probability theory. The first of these articles has recently been published in the Bulletin of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the second has been posted to the international preprint server [arXiv.org](https://arxiv.org). We hope that Miftakhov will now be freed and finally able to continue his PhD studies at the Moscow State University.

The Russian government has recently made major investments into the country's standing as an international center of mathematical research. These commendable efforts can only succeed if the human rights of every member of the academic community, regardless of political convictions, sexual orientation or ethnic background, are fully respected and protected. We urge the Russian law enforcement authorities (the police, the prosecutors and the courts) to exercise leniency, restraint and discretion when dealing with expressions of political dissent, such as that of Azat Miftakhov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill C. Pipher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jill C. Pipher

Background information on the case of Azat Miftakhov

The trial of Azat Miftakhov had continued, with significant delays and interruptions, in the Moscow Golovinsky District Court since July 2020. The trial concluded on December 25, 2020.

The prosecution has requested a 6-year prison sentence for Miftakhov on his hooliganism charge, out of the 7-year maximum theoretically allowed by law.

The trial judge S. N. Bazarov is scheduled to announce the verdict, together with the sentence, on January 11, 2021.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russian-prosecutor-seeks-six-years-for-mathematician-on-charges-he-denies/31015818.html>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-trial-mathematician-miftakhov-detentions-/31019428.html>

Since his initial arrest in February 2019, Miftakhov's pretrial detention has been extended by the court multiple times at the prosecution requests, although the Russian law mandates that the pretrial detention, from arrest to conviction, must not exceed 6 months except in some particularly serious and extraordinary circumstances. In May 2020 an appeals court in Moscow denied the appeal by Miftakhov's lawyers seeking his release from the pretrial detention, and he continues to be imprisoned.

During Miftakhov's trial, the prosecution's case was based in large part on the testimony of "secret" government witnesses whose identity was not disclosed. That included a crucial "secret" witness under the pseudonym "Andrey Petrov" who died in January 2020, but whose testimony was nevertheless admitted at trial in October 2020, even though he could not be cross-examined by the defense:

<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/10/14/miftakhov-s-case>

Azat Miftakhov has been recognized as a political prisoner by the Russian human right organization "Memorial."

In November 2020, while the trial was ongoing, the French Mathematical Society issued a statement in support of Azat Miftakhov:

<https://smf.emath.fr/actualites-smf/141120-azat-miftakhov-toujours-emprisonne-en-russie>

Since the end of the trial on December 25, 2020 and in anticipation of the January 11, 2021 verdict in the case, the international mathematical and scientific community has been ramping up support for Azat Miftakhov. Several support petitions/open letters have been started.

The Brazilian Mathematical Society issued a statement in support of Miftakhov on December 30, 2020:

<https://www.sbm.org.br/noticias/manifestacao-a-favor-de-azat-miftakhov>

It is likely that other organizations are considering similar actions.