



AMS Committee on Human
Rights of Mathematicians
Attn: Dr. Karen Saxe
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June 4, 2021

Attn: Lisa Peterson
Acting Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
U.S. Department of State

Re: Biden-Putin June 16 summit and the case of Azat Miftakhov

Dear Assistant Secretary Peterson,

The American Mathematical Society Committee on the Human Rights of Mathematicians is contacting you regarding the upcoming June 16 summit between Presidents Biden and Putin in Switzerland. We know from President Biden's statements, particularly from his remarks honoring this year's Memorial Day, that he places high importance on the issues of human rights and that he intends to discuss the topic of human rights abuses in Russia with President Putin at the summit. In this regard we would like to bring to your attention the case of Azat Miftakhov, a mathematics PhD student at the Moscow State University and a prominent political prisoner.

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 American Mathematical Society is committed to supporting the human rights of mathematicians around the world, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Azat Miftakhov was arrested in February 2019 in Moscow on a putative vandalism charge related to a protest action at the offices of the United Russia party in January 2018. Miftakhov pleaded not guilty and denied the charges against him. Apparently the only actual damage resulting from that protest consisted of a broken window. Credible reports also indicate that Miftakhov has been subjected to considerable mistreatment while incarcerated. The Public Monitoring Commission, an independent Russian watchdog organization overseeing prisons, determined that after his arrest Miftakhov's body bore the signs of torture, apparently inflicted by the interrogators attempting to extract a false confession. A Russian human organization "Memorial" recognized Azat Miftakhov as a political prisoner. Numerous international scientific organizations, including the American Mathematical Society, have spoken in support of Miftakhov and called for his release.

Miftakhov was held in pretrial detention following his initial arrest in February 2019. After much delay, his court trial took place in Moscow in the Fall of 2020. Much of the government's 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. We note that a recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights in November 2020 in relation to a case from Turkey held that such "secret" testimony, particularly in the trials of political dissidents, cannot be used as a basis for conviction. On January 18, 2021 Judge Bazarov announced a verdict in the case, finding Miftakhov guilty of the charge of hooliganism and sentencing him to six years in prison, to be served in a general regime penal colony,

the maximum sentence requested by the prosecutors. The sentence is viewed as grossly excessive and unfair by the international scientific community.

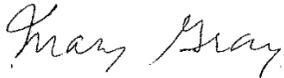
Miftakhov's case is widely known in Russia and he is perhaps the second best known political prisoner in Russia after Alexei Navalny himself.

On June 9 an appeals court in Moscow is scheduled to hear the appeal of Miftakhov's verdict and sentence.

Several weeks before the Biden-Putin June 16 summit was announced, an international support committee scheduled a special online conference, the *Azat Miftakhov Day*, for June 16, 2021, dedicated to his case.

We ask that the U.S. State Department consider including the discussion of the Azat Miftakhov's case during the June 16 summit between Presidents Biden and Putin and possibly raising this case with the Russian side during the preparations for the summit as well. Azat Miftakhov serves as a symbol of hope and resilience to many young people and to the scientific community in Russia. If the Russian government could be persuaded to release him as a gesture of good will, that could serve as sign that significant progress is possible in relations between Russia and the United States.

Sincerely,



Mary Gray, Chair
AMS Committee on the Human Rights of Mathematicians

Background links:

<http://www.ams.org/about-us/governance/policy-statements/miftakhov>

<http://www.ams.org/images/PipherLtr.Miftakhov01-05-21.pdf>

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

<https://memohrc.org/ru/bulletins/spisok-lic-priznannyh-politicheskimi-zaklyuchyonnymi-pravozashchitnym-centrom-memorial-3>

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

<https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/07/08/86203-podozrevaemuyu-ne-uznali-poterpevshie-ne-prishli>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/moscow-mathematician-miftakhov-sentenced-to-six-years-in-prison/31050751.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azat_Miftakhov

<https://caseazatmiftakhov.org>

<https://news.doxajournal.ru/novosti/komitet-azata-miftahova-organizuet-onlajn-konferenciyu-v-znak-solidarnosti-s-politzaklyuchennym-matematikom/>