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COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE - COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

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Russian Federation: Lawyer's Arrest Based on Planted Evidence

The International Commission of Jurists' Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (ICJ/CIJL) demands the Russian authorities to immediately release a lawyer arrested on 24 October after police planted a firearm in his car. Mr. Mikhail Ivanovich Trepashkin's arrest and detention prevent him from representing relatives of one of the victims in the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings case.

"Planting evidence and arresting a person on that basis makes a mockery of the rule of law", said Linda Besharaty-Movaed, ICJ/CIJL Legal Advisor. "Mr. Trepashkin's unlawful detention demonstrates that Russian lawyers can be arrested for discharging their professional duties".

Mr. Trepashkin was arrested on charges of "possession and transportation of an unlicensed firearm" after police officers openly threw a bag that contained a gun into his car.

In 2002, Mr. Trepashkin worked as a consultant for a commission that investigated the 1999 bombings, which had been exclusively blamed on Chechen insurgents, and found that the Security Service had been complicit in the bombings.

Immediately after he presented his findings, the Military Prosecutor initiated proceedings against Mr. Trepashkin for "disclosing classified information". Even though he was indicted, his case laid dormant until September 2003, when a book reproduced some of his findings. Mr. Trepashkin then won an indefinite postponement of the case from the Supreme Court.

For further information, please contact José Zeitune, Lawyer, at +41 22 979 3812. End.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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