

Embassy of the Russian Federation
Drammensveien 74
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Oslo, 31st January 2017

Your Excellencies,

We write to you as the chair of the committee of freedom of expression in the Norwegian Library Association (NLA) and the chair of the Writers in Prison Committee of Norwegian PEN,

Natalya Sharina, Director of the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow, has now been under house arrest for more than a year. The Norwegian Library Association and the Norwegian PEN organization remains extremely concerned over the treatment of Sharina. She was arrested and placed under house arrest in October 2015 after being accused of inciting hatred or animosity towards a social group by allegedly holding banned books in the Library. Sharina was subsequently arrested, and placed under house arrest. The Court has now extended her house arrest until 28 April 2017, but allowed Natalya Sharina to have daily walks in fresh air for two hours.


We express our deepest concerns at the continued imprisonment of Sharina, and call for her immediate and unconditional release if she is held – as we believe is very likely to be the case – solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression. We believe that the treatment of the Library of Ukrainian Literature, and its staff – and in particular Natalya Sharina - is completely disproportionate and unnecessary. As such it is an attack on democracy, learning and culture.

Libraries and librarians have a key role in supporting human rights, including freedom of access to information and freedom of expression, and an attack on libraries or librarians is an attack on democracy and culture.

We are strongly committed to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The Norwegian Library Association and the Norwegian PEN calls upon the Russian officials to release Natalya Sharina, in line with Russia's obligation to respect the right to freedom of expression.


Brit Bildøen,

Chair of the Writers in Prison Committee,
Norwegian PEN


Ingeborg Rygh Hjorthen,

Chair of the committee of freedom of expression,
Norwegian Library Association