

URGENT ACTION

IMPRISONED ACTIVIST ALLEGEDLY TORTURED

Azat Miftakhov has been imprisoned since 2019 on charges widely seen as politically motivated. In April 2026, after transfer to an Arctic penal colony, Azat Miftakhov was reportedly tortured, including through beatings, electric shocks and threats of rape, raising serious concerns about his treatment and that of other prisoners. These allegations of torture must be independently and effectively investigated and those suspected to be responsible held to account in fair trials.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prosecutor for Supervision of Law Enforcement in Correctional Institutions of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug
Mityayev Mikhail Arkadyevich

*ul. Dzerzhinskogo, 13
Labytnangi, Harp village
Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug
629420 Russian Federation*

*phone: +7 (34992) 7-25-28
emails: proknadzor-iu-yanao@89.mailop.ru
prokyanao@89.mailop.ru
prokyan-iu@yandex.ru*

Dear Mr. Mityayev,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the treatment and continued imprisonment of Azat Fanisovich Miftakhov (born in 1993). In April 2026, following his transfer to Penal Colony No. 18 "Polar Owl" in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, he has reportedly been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including through beatings, electric shocks and threats of rape, allegedly involving both prison staff and inmates acting under their direction.

Azat Miftakhov is a mathematician and former postgraduate student at the Moscow State University who has been imprisoned since 2019 on charges widely considered politically motivated. Upon completing his initial sentence, he was re-arrested in September 2025 and sentenced to a further term under "justifying terrorism" provisions, amid similar concerns that this second case is also politically motivated and based on questionable evidence. He has previously reported ill-treatment in custody, raising serious concerns about a pattern of abuse and impunity.

The allegations of beatings, use of electrical shocks, degrading treatment and sexualized violence against him are grave and must be effectively investigated. Torture is absolutely prohibited under international law, and all those suspected to be responsible must be held accountable in fair proceedings. Failure to act risks further entrenching impunity for such abuses, allowing them to continue unchecked.

I urge you to ensure a prompt, independent, effective and impartial investigation into these allegations, guarantee Azat Miftakhov's protection from torture and other ill-treatment and initiate a review of his case and the legality of his detention.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Azat Miftakhov is a Russian mathematician, former postgraduate student of the Mechanics and Mathematics Department of the Moscow State University and an anarchist activist. He was detained on 1 February 2019 during a broader crackdown on individuals allegedly linked to the anarchist movement. Azat Miftakhov reported that police subjected him to threats of sexual violence and to physical abuse to extract a confession, including the use of a screwdriver against his body. Medical evidence reportedly corroborated signs of abuse. He was also held incommunicado for nearly two days, in violation of both Russian law and international standards, placing him at greater risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

The initial charges against Azat Miftakhov concerned allegations of manufacturing or possessing an improvised explosive device, reportedly discovered in the forested area near Balashikha, a Moscow suburb, in January 2018. The charges were not substantiated and were subsequently dropped, but upon his release from custody (six days later) he was immediately detained again on new charges under Article 213(2) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (“hooliganism by a group of persons by prior conspiracy”) related to a different incident, in which several individuals broke a window of an office of the ruling party United Russia and threw a smoke device inside, causing no injuries or significant damage.

The case against him relied heavily on questionable evidence, including testimony from anonymous witnesses and weak circumstantial links. Despite his consistent denial of involvement – and statements from co-defendants who entered guilty pleas indicating that he was not involved – he was convicted on 18 January 2021 and sentenced to six years’ imprisonment. His prosecution has been widely seen as politically motivated and linked to his activism and perceived dissenting views.

In May 2023, it was reported that state officials disclosed intimate materials identifying him as an LGBTI person to other prisoners. These actions, in addition to violating his privacy, exposed him to a grave risk of abuse within the prison system, a fact undoubtedly known to the officials.

Azat Miftakhov was due for release on 4 September 2025 but was re-arrested immediately after leaving the penal colony and charged with “justifying terrorism” under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code, based on alleged comments made in detention, which he denies. On 28 March 2024, he was sentenced to an additional four years in a penal colony, in what reflects a broader pattern of “revolving door” repression used to prolong the detention of those imprisoned on political grounds. The sentence given to Azat Miftakhov by the court turned out to be one year longer than the prosecution had requested.

On 21 April 2026, he was transferred to serve his sentence to Penal Colony No. 18 “Polar Owl” in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, one of Russia’s most remote penal institutions and a sister facility to the Penal Colony No. 3 “Polar Wolf” where prisoner of conscience Aleksei Navalny died. Shortly after arrival, he reported being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including through beatings, electric shocks and threats of rape, allegedly involving prison staff and inmates acting under their direction. These allegations are consistent with long-standing concerns about the use of torture and other ill-treatment in Russian places of detention and the lack of accountability for such abuses.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian or English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 July

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Azat Miftakhov (he/him)