



**For immediate release – 12 July 2010**

## **Russia: ARTICLE 19 Condemns Conviction of Art Curators**

**Two Russian art curators, Andrei Yerofeev and Yuri Samodurov, who staged an exhibition titled *Forbidden Art 2006* featuring censored Soviet and post-Soviet art works, were today convicted by a Moscow court for "inciting hatred or enmity" and "denigration of human dignity." ARTICLE 19 condemns the fines the two men received as an outright attack on the right to freedom of expression.**

*Forbidden Art 2006* brought together a number of censored art works from well-known contemporary artists in Russia, and included a piece that depicted Mickey Mouse instead of Jesus Christ in paintings portraying scenes from the Bible. On 12 July 2010, Yuri Samodurov was sentenced to a fine of 200.000 RUB (approximately 4320 GBP) and Andrei Yerofeev received a fine of 150.000 (approximately 3240 GBP).

The prosecution claimed that Yuri Samodurov and Andrei Yerofeev, then head of the department for contemporary art at the State Tretyakov Gallery, had arranged the exhibition in such a way that it incited enmity and hatred and also denigrated the dignity of Christian groups, in particular Orthodox Christians.

*"This guilty verdict against Yuri Samodurov and Andrei Yerofeev is an attack on the right to freedom of expression, of which freedom of art is an integral part. Today's decision sends a strong message to the art community in Russia: don't mix art with religion,"* said Dr Agnes Callamard, Executive Director ARTICLE 19.

ARTICLE 19 reminds the Russian Government that neither Russian, nor international human rights law, permit freedom of expression to be restricted or prohibited simply on the grounds that some people find the views expressed offensive or disagreeable. The right to freedom of expression is applicable not only to "information" or "ideas" that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the state or any sector of the population.

### **Background**

Yuri Samodurov, together with curator Ludmila Vasilevskaia, had previously received a conditional sentence after a conviction for inciting hatred following the organisation of an exhibition entitled *Caution! Religion!* in 2003, also at the Sakharov Museum in Moscow. Yuri Samodurov and Ludmila Vasilevskaia took the case to the European Court of Human Rights. The case is currently ongoing.

ENDS

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.