

Endlich frei: Igor Koltisch

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English version below

Der belarussische Musiker und politische Aktivist Igor Koltisch (englische Transkription: Igor Koltysch) ist am 2. Februar aus einem ukrainischen Untersuchungsgefängnis entlassen worden. Dort hatte man ihn zweieinhalb Jahre gefangen gehalten. Er hat sich nach seiner Freilassung bei Amnesty International für die Unterstützung bedankt.

Igor Koltisch ist ein gesellschaftskritischer Musiker und Unterstützer der belarussischen Opposition. Er war seit 2007 in einer Untersuchungshaftanstalt in der Stadt Simferopol in der Autonomen Republik Krim in der Ukraine gefangen gehalten worden. Die ukrainischen Behörden wollten ihn an Belarus ausliefern.

Am 10. Dezember 2009 hatte der Europäische Gerichtshof entschieden, dass Igor Koltisch nicht nach Belarus ausgeliefert werden darf, da ihm dort Folter und andere Misshandlungen gedroht hätten. Bei einer Rückkehr nach Belarus wäre er außerdem in Gefahr gewesen, in einem unfairen Verfahren zum Tode verurteilt zu werden. Der Gerichtshof hatte erklärt, dass Igor Koltisch umgehend freizulassen sei, da es keine rechtliche Grundlage für seine Inhaftierung gegeben hätte. Darüber hinaus hatte der Gerichtshof die Bedingungen, unter denen Igor Koltisch festgehalten wurde, als unmenschlich und erniedrigend bezeichnet.

Obwohl die ukrainische Generalstaatsanwaltschaft anfangs verkünden ließ, dass man Igor Koltisch erst freilassen wolle, wenn das Urteil des Europäischen Gerichtshofs im März 2010 rechtskräftig werde, hat man ihn am 2. Februar 2010 aus dem Gefängnis entlassen.

In einem kurzen Gespräch mit Amnesty International, das am 4. Februar in seiner Wohnung stattfand, drückte Igor Koltisch seine Dankbarkeit für "die Bemühungen" aus. Er sagte außerdem, dass er sich noch an die wiedergewonnene Freiheit gewöhnen müsse und dass er sich erst einmal um seine Gesundheit kümmern werde.

Igor Koltisch hat gerade den Flüchtlingsstatus in der Ukraine beantragt. Amnesty International wird die weitere Entwicklung seines Asylantrags beobachten und verfolgen, inwieweit die vom Europäischen Gerichtshof geforderten Schadensersatzzahlungen geleistet werden.

Weitere Aktionen des Eilaktionsnetzes sind zurzeit nicht erforderlich. Vielen Dank allen, die Appelle geschrieben haben.

Ukraine releases Belarusian opposition activist

Amnesty International has welcomed the release of the Belarusian opposition activist and musician Igor Koktysh, who has been held in a pre-trial detention centre in Ukraine for two and a half years.

Igor Koktysh had been detained in Ukraine since June 2007 when Belarus requested his extradition over an accusation that he committed murder in Belarus in January 2001, an offence he had been acquitted of in 2002. He was released on Monday.

Amnesty International believes that he was charged by the Belarusian authorities because of his social and political activism. Before his release, the organization considered Igor Koktysh to be a prisoner of conscience.

Speaking from his home in Ukraine on Thursday, Igor Koktysh thanked Amnesty International "for the efforts you have taken". He said that he is still adjusting to his freedom and that his first concern is his health.

Igor Koktysh's release follows a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling in his favour on 10 December 2009. He had filed a complaint with the Court in October 2007.

The Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office initially stated that he would be released only after the judgment of the ECtHR became final in March 2010, but he was released on 2 February.

In its judgement the ECtHR said that Igor Koktysh should not be extradited to Belarus, where he would have been at serious risk of torture or other ill-treatment and could have been given an unfair trial and sentenced to death.

The Court said that there was no legal basis to detain him obliging Ukraine to release him immediately and also stated that the conditions in which he was held in Ukraine amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment.

Igor Koktysh is accused of "premeditated, aggravated murder" of a close friend's relative in January 2001, under Article 139 of the Criminal Code of Belarus, which carries the death penalty.

Igor Koktysh was held in detention in Belarus from January 2001 until his trial that December. While in custody he was allegedly tortured and ill-treated. This included being beaten and locked naked in a freezing cell, as well as being deprived of necessary medication for his asthma, in order to force him to confess.

Igor Koktysh told Amnesty International that during his detention in Belarus the head investigator of Brest district told him that he knew he was not guilty of the crime, but that he was under pressure from his superiors. The investigator refused to repeat these words in court.

Able to prove that he was in another city when the murder took place, he was acquitted and released. This verdict was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Belarus on 1 February 2002.

After his release, Igor Koktysh moved to Ukraine where he registered to live and work and met his future wife. In April 2002, the Belarusian Prosecutor General appealed against his acquittal and the case was returned to the lower court for a retrial.

Igor Koktysh is currently pursuing his application for refugee status in Ukraine. Amnesty International said it will continue to monitor the progress of his asylum application and the payment of compensation ordered by the European Court of Human Rights.

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