



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
Human Rights Defender

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Warsaw, *07/01/2010*

**Mr Thomas Hammarberg
Commissioner for Human Rights
Council of Europe**

**67 – 075 Strasbourg Cedet
France**

Dear Commissioner,

It is with indignation and regret that I have learned about the arrest of Ms Ludmila Alekseeva, a 82-year old Sakharov Prize laureate, the head of the Moscow Helsinki Group and the co-founder of the Memorial organisation, by the police in Moscow. Ms Alekseeva, who has fought for human rights for many years, is a person deserving the deepest respect and the highest regard. Bearing in mind the circumstances of the case and the age of Ms Alekseeva, her arrest and detention must be met with strong opposition of all people who care about the rights of an individual. This cannot be changed by the fact that the detention was short-term.

The freedom of assembly results among others from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 17(1) of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993 guarantees the rights and freedoms stemming from international law, while Article 31 grants citizens the right to assemble peacefully. Such was the nature of the assembly organised in Moscow on New Year's Eve which called for observance of the provisions of the Russian Constitution and the right to assemble peacefully.

Therefore, the activities of the Russian authorities deserve severe condemnation from all people respecting the internationally recognized standards of rights and freedoms of man

and citizen. In view of the above, I take the liberty to ask you to take a stand on the regrettable activities of the authorities of the Russian Federation. I am sure that the official position on the case by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights will be of huge importance for the social reception of the activities violating the basic human rights.

*Yours sincerely,
Ben Hebert*