

To Prof. Daya Reddy
President of the International Science Council:

May 6, 2019

Dear Professor Daya Reddy,

Thank you for your response to the inquiry of the International Mathematical Union regarding the two students, Azat Miftakhov and Pavlo Hryb, imprisoned on political grounds in the Russian Federation. I agree with the statement that their arrests are not directly related to their science discipline nor their pursuit of their scientific research. However their situation is extremely troubling, as tortures were reported against both students.

Azat Mikhtahov comes from the Tatarstan region of Russia. He showed interest in mathematics from school years and his first scientific paper was published in 2016. Russian media report that in recent years he experienced harassment and threats for his ethnic background and anarchist views. The campaign on his arrest activated upon his return from a conference in Nizhni Novgorod, where Azat gave his first research talk in English. A letter in his support was signed by many prominent scientists, including Noam Chomsky, Sergei Konyagin, Victor Vasilliev and Anatoly Vershik. Both the letter and the Russian media mention that Azat Miftakhov was tortured with a screwdriver and tried to cut his veins.

Pavlo Hryb is a Ukrainian citizen who just finished his first university year and was 19 years old, when he was abducted by Russian authorities from the territory of Belarus in 2017. Pavlo went to Belarus to meet a girl he got known through the internet. He claims he was first taken to a forest by unknown people, who took his personal belongings and beaten him while capturing on camera. Tortures then continued in a different location. Pavlo was given no food or water before his first interrogation in the Russian town Jartsevo. His executioners threatened him with continued tortures if he would not confess in planning a terrorist act. In March 2019 Pavlo Hryb was accused in terrorism and sentenced to 6 years in prison. Denying these accusations, he started a hunger strike but terminated it after several days. Pavlo suffers from a disabling and serious medical condition. The United States and the European Union call for an immediate release of Pavlo Hryb.

Unfortunately, your letter gives us no advice on how to proceed, as the ISC recommends appealing to Scholars at Risk only if we could prove that these arrests were related to their student-related conduct, which we do not claim to be so. I believe that a statement from either ISC or SAR would influence Russian authorities and provide an invaluable moral support to the arrested students.

As for the boycott initiative, at the moment its major purpose is to draw attention to the human rights violations caused by Putin's regime. The boycott is not meant to penalize Russian mathematicians for the actions of Russian government or prevent their collaboration with the colleagues abroad. We greatly appreciate that the ISC suggests the International Mathematical Union to convey to the organisers of the International Congress of Mathematicians the importance of the Principle of Freedom and Responsibility in science.

Dr Masha Vlasenko,



on behalf of the organizers and supporters of the ICM 2022 boycott