

His Excellency Yury Viktorovich Fedotov
Ambassador of the Russian Federation
13, Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4QX

18 November 2005

Dear Ambassador,

I am writing in my capacity as the Chairman of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC), which is an independent group of specialist barristers and experts who work on a voluntary basis to develop law and human rights protection throughout the world. The Bar Council of England and Wales represents over 12,000 independent barristers, legal academics and lawyers in Government service in the United Kingdom. BHRC sends delegations of barristers to all parts of the world, for investigation, training, and especially trial observation.

I am writing to raise with you the issue of the treatment afforded to Professor William Bowring, a practising barrister and member of the Executive Committee of BHRC, who was appointed by BHRC to travel to Nizhni Novgorod between Tuesday 15 and Thursday 17 November 2005 to observe the criminal and civil court hearings concerning Stanislav Dmitriyevsky, Chief Editor of the newspaper "Human Rights Protection" and Executive Director of the Society for Russian-Chechen Friendship, on Wednesday 16 November 2005.

Professor Bowring had already travelled, without hindrance, to Nizhny Novgorod in order to investigate this situation on behalf of BHRC on 16-17 June this year. On 2-3 October this year he travelled to Nizhnii Tagil in the Urals to observe a parole hearing on behalf of BHRC, again without hindrance, using his new multi-entry visa.

On the morning of Tuesday 15 November Professor Bowring was refused entry to Russia and was subsequently deported, in the following circumstances.

He travelled on the overnight Aeroflot flight from London, with his British Passport, containing a recently issued multi-entry visa, which was valid from 10 September 2005 to 10 September 2006.

Professor Bowring arrived at 0500 on 15 November 2005 at Sheremtyevo Airport, Terminal 2. At passport control the border guard appeared to see something on her computer screen, and asked him to wait to one side. A more senior guard came over in a few minutes and took his passport. No explanation was given, and he was asked no questions. He was taken after a while to room no.21, in another part of the terminal building, and told to wait outside the door. His air ticket was also taken. He was not prevented from using his mobile phone, and called the Moscow office of the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), a project taking cases to the European Court of Human Rights, of which he is Academic Coordinator. Tatiana Kasatkina of the EHRAC partner, the Human Rights Centre of *Memorial* (the well-known Russian NGO) phoned him, and a female border guard agreed to speak to her. The border

guard explained in Professor Bowring's presence that they were simply "ispolnayushi", that is, carrying out instructions, they did not know what this was about, and he might still be allowed to enter Russia. There was no-one more senior to speak to. The guard said that Professor Bowring would probably be taken to see someone more senior later.

Professor Bowring was detained until about 1100. He was told nothing, and was asked no questions. He was not provided with food or drink, but he was able to buy coffee from a coffee machine, using Russian roubles, which, fortunately he had with him. At just before 1100 he was given back his passport and a boarding card, and placed by a border guard on the 1115 Aeroflot flight to London. Again, the guard said she knew nothing, except that Prof Bowring was being deported. The multi-entry visa had been cancelled, with diagonal stamps reading "ANNULIROVANO".

Professor Bowring has been travelling to Russia very regularly since 1983. He is the Academic Coordinator of the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre, which assists Russian women and men in taking more than 80 cases against Estonia, Latvia and the Russian Federation. He has appeared as an advocate against Russia in the European Court of Human Rights; and has also represented the interests of ethnic Russians in the Baltic states. He has served as an expert for the Council of Europe in Russia on five occasions in the last year, most recently on 22-24 September, when he travelled to Abakan, Khakassia, in Siberia, using his new multi-entry visa without difficulty, and 26 October, when he visited Moscow, again without difficulty. He has never been stopped or questioned, and has always travelled to Russia freely.

I would be grateful for a full explanation as to the reasons for the action of the Russian authorities, and the assurances of your Government that Professor Bowring will be able to travel to Russia in future.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Carter QC
Chairman, Bar Human Rights Committee