

Martens Summer School on International Law

Russia and International Human Rights Law

**Human Rights in Russian Courts: an NGO
Perspective**

Seminar 1: *Presentation of an NGO's work*

by Anton Burkov



SUTYAJNIK is a non-governmental human rights organization founded in Yekaterinburg, Russia in 1994. Sutyajnik is a human rights resource center that helps citizens and organizations realize rights guaranteed in the Russian Constitution and international treaties by

- litigating public interest cases,
- educating in human rights, and
- informing the public about the mechanisms for human rights protection.

One of Sutyajnik's principal goals is to defend human rights by working to bring domestic legislation and practice into conformity with international and constitutional standards

СУТЯЖНИК - SUTYAJNIK

- Traditionally in Russia calling somebody "a barrator" ("Sutyajnik") means indecent. According to Ozhegov Explanatory Dictionary, a barrator is "a person inclined to lawsuit". This word has a clearly expressed color of criticism. However, in fact, a barrator is a person which knows and uses actively the existing mechanisms of legal protection of his own or public interests. Neivinskaya Zhizn", No. 4, February 1998

<http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/reports/2005/eng/cover.htm>

1994

- Started as an organization to handle labor cases for trade unions
 - Workers faced more issues than labor related
 - Some labor issues could not be solved domestically
- In 1996 Russia joined the Council of Europe and in 1998 ratified the European Convention of Human Rights

www.sutyajnik.ru

SUTYAJNIK carries out its mission by:

- Providing clinical legal education by supervising law students who consult and represent clients in strategic and conventional cases;
- Providing legal aid by telephone, at public walk-in centers, via the internet <http://sutyajnik.ru/advices/>;
- Providing registration and other legal resource services to NGOs in the Urals region;
- Representing individuals and NGOs in judicial and administrative forums in both strategic public interest litigation and conventional cases, including
 - Challenging legislative and administrative enactments in the Russian courts;
 - Preparing and litigating cases in the European Court of Human Rights
- Operating a news agency for human rights NGOs

LITIGATING

- Regular cases but of 'public interest' for local population:
 - Consumers rights cases ('shoes' case, 'Hennessey' case, 'Transaero' case)
 - toilets cases,
 - cost of transportation cases
 - Labor cases (2010 unemployment case)
- “public interest cases” per se: administrative detention; detention in psychiatric hospital; prison conditions
- Challenging normative acts: 'drivers licence' case; 'election commission instruction on spending funds'

where possible all these are done with direct application of the Convention and the ECHR case-law

- bring cases to the ECHR as a last resort

EDUCATING

- Teach what we have learned and experienced
 - at special trainings
 - at universities (mostly private)
- Publish
 - newspaper and law-journal articles
 - Books <http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/>



INFORMING PUBLIC

- Conduct PR-campaigns
 - Press-releases
 - Press-conferences http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/actions/p_v_gov
 - round tables (NGO and the judiciary)
http://sutyajnik.ru/cgi-bin/actions.php?action_id=10009
 - conferences
- Internet-radio (first audio of hearing from the ECHR – Rakevich v. Russia)
- Internet-video (first video of hearing from the ECHR – Rakevich v. Russia)
- Volunteer run Facebook account www.facebook.com/sutyajnik
- Twitter account – still looking for a volunteer to create it and run it
- Create web-site www.sutyajnik.ru integrated with data-base

web-site www.sutyajnik.ru

Council of Europe mentioned the site among Russian web-sites where translations of the ECHR judgments are available in Russian

- It's a data-base (litigation docs, judgments, press-releases)
- Integrated with the web-site
- Content principle – what people look for, not what NGO wants to share
- Different parts of the web-site are interlinked (information sorted in files)
- 3500 users daily, more than regional courts of general or commercial jurisdiction, or even Russian Supreme Court and Constitutional Court

let's explore it www.sutyajnik.ru

web-site www.sutyajnik.ru

- Home page <http://sutyajnik.ru/>
- News <http://sutyajnik.ru/news>
- New docs on cases <http://sutyajnik.ru/cases>
- Events <http://sutyajnik.ru/cgi-bin/actions.php>
- Podcasts <http://sutyajnik.ru/audio/>
- Left column of the home page – user-friendly division of the content – what people want to find, not what the NGO wants to tell about itself
- Library <http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library>
- Interaction – anyone can leave comments
- Sustainability – small ads at the bottom

Home work!

- Enjoy reading annual reports in English or Russian
 - 2011 <http://sutyajnik.org/3/47.html>
 - 2010 <http://sutyajnik.org/3/45.html>
 - 2009 <http://sutyajnik.org/1/22.html>
 - 2006 <http://sutyajnik.ru/documents/2391.html>
 - 2005 <http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/reports/2005/eng/>
 - 2004 <http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/reports/2004/eng/>
 - 2003
http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/reports/report_2003_eng.html
 - 2002
<http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/reports/Report2002eng.htm>