

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION  
SUTYAJNIK

**IT'S TIME...**  
2004 Annual Report

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## SUTYAJNIK — A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

**What are we?** 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 in the following areas:

- freedom of association;
- rights of minorities and discrimination;
- freedom from torture;
- freedoms from unlawful detention, arrest, and forced medical treatment;
- freedom of expression;
- freedom of religion;
- other rights and freedoms.

**Who are we?** SUTYAJNIK is a group of lawyers and senior law students dedicated to protecting the traditional areas of human rights. Sutyajnik was founded in 1994 by Sergei Beliaev, who remains its president.

### SUTYAJNIK'S Board of Directors:

Tatyana Merzlyakova, Human Rights Ombudsman for Sverdlovsk oblast

Ludmila Alexeeva, Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group;

Demyan Bakhrakh, Professor of Law at the Urals State Law Academy

Kathryn Hendley, Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin Law School

William Anspach, partner in the union-side labor law firm Friedman & Wolf

Irene Stevenson, Field Representative, Solidarity Center / AFL-CIO in Central Asia

**What do we do?** SUTYAJNIK carries out its mission by:

- Providing legal aid, by telephone, at public walk-in centers, via the internet.
- 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.
- Conducting public issue campaigns and lobbying.
- Sponsoring legal seminars and conferences.
- Providing clinical legal education by supervising law students who consult and represent clients in strategic and conventional cases.
- Operating a news agency for human rights NGOs.
- Challenging legislative and administrative enactments in the Russian courts.
- Preparing and litigating cases in the European Court of Human Rights.

**Who is supporting and has supported us in the past?** The following organizations: American Center for International Labor Solidarity, USAID, National Endowment for Democracy, Eurasia Foundation, Know-How Foundation, Ford Foundation, the Institute of International Education, Open Society Institute-Moscow, Open Society Institute-Budapest, John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Civil Liberties Foundation, the Moscow Helsinki Group, the European Council, European Commission, etc.

### What have we achieved?

In Domestic Forums: Among our most significant victories of the past years in changing practices in the application of laws, the following may be singled out:

- Access to Justice: Sutyajnik secured a decision by the Constitutional Court that ruled unconstitutional the provision of the Russian Administrative Code that denied the right to appeal administrative decisions.
- Property Rights: The widespread practice of airport Security Service personnel confiscating and destroying passengers' possessions

(including items which transport is forbidden) was declared unlawful by the Sverdlovsk oblast court.

- **Right to Liberty:** The practice of compensation for moral damages in connection with illegal detention for less than 3 hours was established by a decision by the Verh-Isetskiy district court of Ekaterinburg.

- **Right to Association:** A precedent was set obligating the Sverdlovsk Oblast's Main Administration of the Russian Ministry of Justice to refund fees paid by NGOs when registration is refused.

- **Right to Life and Freedom from Torture:** In February 2004 the Supreme Court of Russia upheld the decision regarding two militiamen, who had been sentenced for power abuse that resulted in torture during interrogation and the death of the interrogated person.

## **OUR ACTIVITIES**

### **LEGAL COUNSELLING**

Our staff attorneys provide citizens with free legal consultations at public drop-in centers in Yekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk oblast, as well as over the telephone and by mail. This year we had to reduce the number of drop-in centers. Despite the reduction of the centers, in 2004, our attorneys provided 1,814 consultations, of which 731 were over the telephone, 810 were in person and included assistance with the preparation of legal documents, and 273 by post. In 2004, Sutyajnik launched legal counseling over the Internet.

Topics covered in our consultations included the following:

- 1) complaints, including eligibility, to the European Court of Human Rights and the UN Committee on Human Rights — 32 %;
- 2) civil procedure — 26 %;
- 3) labour law — 19 %;
- 4) civil law — 9 %;
- 5) housing law — 4 %;
- 6) tax law — 1 %;
- 7) administrative law — 5 %;
- 8) family law — 4 %.

## **REPRESENTATION OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN DOMESTIC COURTS**

Our staff attorneys represent individuals and organizations in courts of general jurisdiction in Sverdlovsk Oblast (including the cities of Ekaterinburg, Nizhny Tagil, Polevskoy, Berezovsky, Revda, and others), and Tyumen and Chelyabinsk oblasts, as well as in the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, the Commercial Courts for the Ural District at all levels, and the Charter Court of Sverdlovsk Oblast.

One of Sutyajnik's priorities is defending human rights by bringing domestic legislation into conformity with the international and constitutional standards.

For example, the case of Z family (Z v. State Duma) concerns the right of prisoners and their spouses to have children. Mass media labeled the case «My Dad Is In Prison». The fundamental human right of married couples to procreate is the subject of this important case, currently under consideration by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.

In their application to the Constitutional Court a married couple that has been refused conjugal visits («long visits») is challenging provisions of the Russian Criminal Executive Code that prohibit conjugal visits during the initial 10 years of incarceration under a strict regime. Due to the wife's medical condition, the extended denial of conjugal visits with her incarcerated husband will effectively assure that the couple will never be able to have children.

The couple claims that this prohibition violates guarantees of the sanctity one's private and family life guaranteed in the Russian Federation Constitution (Article 23) and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (Article 8).

The outcome of this case will have a wide reaching impact. Prisoners constitute a significant portion of the Russian population, with 665 Russians in jail per 100,000 population, making Russia the 2d highest per capita prison population in the world (after the USA).

For description of other cases handled by Sutyajnik see the Russian version of the Report.

## THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

International human rights protection has become one of our organization's top priorities since 2003.

Sutyajnik received 580 inquiries regarding the use of international mechanisms for the defense of civil rights — 1/3 of all requests for legal assistance. We explain submission rules and admissibility criteria to the individuals and representatives of organizations who turn to us, so as to prevent the submission of clearly inadmissible complaints to international forums.

In 2004, the organization prepared and filed 10 applications on behalf of citizens to the European Court of Human Rights, alleging violations of such human rights as the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture and inhumane treatment and punishment, the right to property, and freedom of association. Our organization does not seek to maximize the number of cases. In preparing applications, we select cases that meet the criteria of admissibility and have the prospect of setting precedent, i. e. affirmatively influencing the making and application of laws in Russia in order to promote their conformity to European standards for the protection of human rights.

The *Rakevich v. Russia* case concerns arbitrary and unlawful detention in psychiatric hospitals. On 28 October 2003, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Ms Rakevich was detained in violation of the procedure prescribed by Russian law, in that the judicial decision ordering her confinement was delivered 39 days after she was detained, instead of the 5 days prescribed by law (violation of Article 5 (1) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms). The Court also found that under the Law on Psychiatric Treatment and Associated Civil Right Guarantees («the Law»), a detainee did not have a right to initiate a judicial review of detention in violation of Article 5(4) of the European Convention. This year our attorneys have concentrated on implementation of the judgment, lobbying changes in the Law required under the European Court decision. For more details please refer to [www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/r\\_v\\_r.html](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/r_v_r.html)

The case *Sutyazhnik v. Russia* concerns the right to a fair trial and the right to association in Russia. The case is significant for Russian

NGOs because of a 1995 law that forced all NGOs in Russia to re-register. Written observations on the admissibility and merits of the case were exchanged in April, 2004, and in October 2004, the European Court of Human Rights awarded Sutyajnik's staff lawyer legal aid, suggesting that the decision on admissibility will be forthcoming soon. For more details, please visit [www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/sutyajnik\\_v\\_russia.html](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/sutyajnik_v_russia.html)

Our attorneys continue to work on the domestic implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and other international treaties. This year we were able to apply the European Convention in district courts judgments three times. Anton Burkov successfully defended an LLM in International Human Rights Law dissertation *The Impact of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on Russian Law* at the University of Essex. The dissertation concerned domestic implementation of the Convention in the Russian Federation. During his dissertation research, Sutyajnik posted the web-site *Learning How to Apply the European Convention in Domestic Courts* (available at [www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/echr/school](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/echr/school)). The site provides information on (1) all national legislation on the issue, (2) international documents, (3) translated ECtHR case-law (major cases), (4) major judgments against Russia with lawyers' comments, (5) judgments by Russian courts of different levels and jurisdictions that have invoked the Convention, (6) relevant books and law journal articles on the issue, and (7) online-video-lectures.

## GENERAL PROJECTS

### Major funding for innovative promotion of human rights

In 2004 Sutyajnik received major grants from the European Commission (Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights), the MacArthur Foundation, and the Open Society Institute (Budapest) to conduct innovate projects that promote Human Rights.

### Internet Conference Center

Sutyajnik received funds from the MacArthur Foundation to continue the work of a previously funded project that developed an «Internet

Conference Center» («ICC») to disseminate human rights related information and data.

The new project will enhance the ICC as a resource center of practical training on requirements and protections contained in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (the «Convention»). ICC activities are targeted at human rights NGOs in the Urals Region, law enforcement agencies, and the general public.

Through the internet and Sutyajnik's web site ([www.sutyajnik.ru](http://www.sutyajnik.ru)), the ICC will disseminate up-to-date information about the Convention, and decisions and practices of the European Court of Human Rights. Training methods to explain local application of the Convention will be available via video and internet film.

In addition, Sutyajnik will offer six-month stipends to young NGO lawyers who have successfully completed training at the ICC and wish to intern at human rights NGOs.

This new project is designed to complement two other newly funded projects (by the OSI, Budapest and the European Commission) and will result in an improved distribution system for Human Rights information, improved communication and cooperation among a wide circle of Human Rights and socially activist NGOs, education of and cooperation with law enforcement agencies in raising their compliance with the Convention's requirements, and motivation and assistance to ordinary citizens who wish to enjoy the rights protected by the Convention and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

#### **Litigation of Human Rights Cases in the Higher Russian Courts (Constitutional and Supreme) and in the European Court of Human Rights**

The Open Society Institute (Budapest) has agreed to fund a two-year Sutyajnik project to prepare and litigate human rights cases in higher Russian Courts and the European Court of Human Rights. This project will build upon Sutyajnik's previous OSI-funded project. Our goal is to resolve domestic human rights problems fostering domestic judicial practices that conform to international human rights standards stated in such international agreements as the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, the UN Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Strategic litigation is key to achieving this goal. Through consultations with the public and the legal establishment and review of the media, Sutyajnik will identify and challenge actions at the local, regional, and federal level that violate international norms of human rights and identify the need for new legislation to reform institutions that violate human rights.

Sutyajnik will continue to operate the Consultative Bureau funded previously by the OSI, providing advice on the practical application of human rights norms to the actions of the local, regional, and federal government.

In connection with this project, Sutyajnik will focus on those areas previously identified as most frequently subject to violation: discrimination, violence directed by law enforcement agencies against citizens and foreigners, and barriers to NGOs enjoyment of the right of association.

To initiate this project, Sutyajnik will host a conference on bringing Russian legal practices and legislation into conformity with international human rights standards, participants of which will include representatives of NGOs, government authorities, the mass media and the education establishment.

Sutyajnik will also publish materials on the protection of human rights. At the conclusion of the project Sutyajnik will prepare a report on Russian legislation and legal practices that must be enacted or reformed to conform to international human rights standards. Sutyajnik will also continue to update its web-accessible database of its human rights cases in the European Court.

Lastly Sutyajnik will train and utilize young legal interns as new soldiers in the battle for human rights.

#### **Practical School of International Human Rights Protection for Young Lawyers**

Sutyajnik received an 18-month grant from the European Commission as part of the Commission's European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights to conduct a «Practical School of International Human Rights Protection for Young Lawyers».

This project will target student-lawyers, young representatives and lawyers of human rights NGOs and newly hired advocates and lawyers of municipal and state authorities. We will establish a resource educational centre offering practical training to these young lawyers in the international protection of human rights from torture, discrimination and xenophobia. By strengthening connections between regional NGOs, specializing in protecting victims of torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, discrimination and xenophobia, we will expand the publicly available network of free, qualified legal assistance.

By creating an informal network of such organizations, the project will assist participants in establishing a strategy for the effective selection of cases and a management system to optimize the work of all participating organizations.

The Practical School will offer participants five sessions, each running three or four days, with sufficient time in between for substantial homework on a variety of human rights topics. Handbooks and videos are to be issued on the project. At its conclusion, participants will compete for five three-week internships at Sutyajnik.

### **The Cooperating with the International Senior Lawyers Project**

Since 2004 Sutyajnik has cooperated with the International Senior Lawyers Project ([www.islp.org](http://www.islp.org)). ISLP provided Sutyajnik legal assistance from two global law firms with offices in Moscow, New York, London, Boston. Volunteer lawyers assisted in preparing legal documents for cases before the European Court of Human Rights, the Russian Supreme Court and the Russian Constitutional Court. ISLP organized for two volunteers (retired attorney Douglas Kramer and Dr. Judith Ahrens) to work in Ekaterinburg pro bono for three months. They helped to increase our capacity and professionalism to meet the needs of the Russian community, as well as to work on court cases and public relations.

### **SUTYAJNIKS TEACH**

In the course of the year, we held seminars, round tables, and press-conferences on the various activities of Sutyajnik and other organizations in the city and the Urals region. For example, we held two-day trainings for Uzbek advocates and human rights activists on strategic litigation. Our staff attorneys were invited to different seminars and workshops as trainers. For the second time, at the invitation of the American Bar Association's Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI, Moscow), Sutyajnik lawyers conducted the seminar «Challenging normative acts» for practicing attorneys, litigators, and NGO representatives.

For a detailed listing of our undertakings please see the electronic version of this report in Russian on our website at [http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/hr\\_reports](http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/hr_reports)

### **SUTYAJNIKS ARE TAUGHT**

In addition to the organization's own activities, Sutyajnik lawyers participated in other organizations' seminars, trainings, round tables, etc. In April Anton Burkov took part in the National Model United Nations Conference. As one of the Chevening scholar team, Burkov was chosen to represent France at the Commission on Human Rights. Two members of Sutyajnik were invited to the Third Global Linking & Learning Programme On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights (1–10 December 2004, Alcochete, Portugal). Having strengthened their skills to empower people living in extreme poverty through implementation of a human rights framework, the «sutyajniks» returned with a concrete plan to build the capacity of grassroots movements to better promote and defend basic ESC rights.

For a detailed listing of our undertakings please visit the electronic version of this report in Russian on our website at [http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/hr\\_reports](http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/hr_reports)

## PUBLICATIONS

**Law Journal Articles**

In 2004 thirty-seven articles by Sutyajnik lawyers were printed in nationally distributed legal and human rights periodicals on the following topics:

- Russia and the European Court of Human Rights
- State Structure
- Challenging Unlawful Legislation
- Administrative Law
- Authorities and Human Rights Access to Court
- Judges and Law
- Protecting One's Own Rights

The articles can be accessed in the Sutyajnik's web-library at <http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/articles>

Sutyajnik also issued a report on human rights violations in Sverdlovsk Oblast in 2004.

This year Sutyajnik attorneys authored two articles in the English language:

A. Demeneva, A. Burkov, «Probable Legal Consequences of Rakevich v. Russia», *Human Rights Law Review Student Supplement 2003-2004, August 2004, at 7*. The article provides the background and details of the Rakevich v. Russia case, in which the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Russia following the hearing on 17 June, 2003. Authors of the article investigate the case's possible influence on Russian administrative law and practice. The entire article is accessible at [http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/articles/2004/probable\\_legal\\_consequences.htm](http://sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/articles/2004/probable_legal_consequences.htm)

Anton Burkov contributed his paper «Detention of Mentally Ill Persons in the Russian Federation under Article 5 of the ECHR» to the book *The Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights in Russia: Philosophical, Legal, and Empirical Studies* (= Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics & Society, Vol. 1) ISBN 3-89821-387-0, Paperback, 228 pp.

For more details please refer to [http://sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/book\\_echr\\_implementation.htm](http://sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/book_echr_implementation.htm)

Three Sutyajnik's attorneys and the ISLP volunteers wrote the article «The Legal Order of the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe Standards». This article surveys decisions by the European Court of Human Rights on the merits of cases involving the Russian Federation, as well as decisions on admissibility of cases for which a decision is pending, during the entire period during which Russia has submitted to the Court's jurisdiction. The entire article is accessible at [http://www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/russian\\_legal\\_order.html](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/eng/news/2004/russian_legal_order.html)

**Books**

*The Right to a Fair Trial: European Standards and Russian Practice*

In June 2004, Sutyajnik issued a book entitled *The Right to a Fair Trial: European Standards and Russian Practice*. This is the second volume of the series «International Human Rights Protection.» The authors are: Professor Jeremy McBride, Director of the Human Rights Law & Practice Programme at the University of Birmingham and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees of the International Centre for the Legal Protection for Human Rights INTERIGHTS; Anna Demeneva and Elena Goncharova, lawyers with Sutyajnik's Urals Centre for Constitutional and International Human Rights Protection; and Svetlana Mukhambetova, a lawyer with Social Fund Pravoborets. The book analyses Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights and related judgments from the European Court of Human Rights. Also, several Russian authors explore Russian judicial practices and existing problems in the right to a fair trial. This book is in Russian.

The entire text is accessible at <http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/sborniki/echr2>

*The Russian Constitution: 10 Years of Implementation*

Published in August 2004, this book is dedicated to the 10<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary of the NGO Sutyajnik. Featuring an introduction by the well-known professor of Russian Administrative Law and member of the Sutyajnik's Board of Directors Demyan Bakhrakh, the book contains

decisions by Russian courts of various different levels and jurisdictions on human rights cases advocated by Sutyajnik. All the judgments illustrate direct and effective implementation of the Russian Constitution, which is 10 years old. Edited by Anna Demeneva and Anton Burkov, this book is in Russian.

The entire text is accessible at [http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/sborniki/konst\\_10\\_let\\_primen](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/sborniki/konst_10_let_primen)

### **Essays**

*A Russian Represents France in the Model UN Conference*, by Anton Burkov, Chevening on-line.

«Anton Burkov writes a fascinating account of his attendance at the Model UN Conference. As one of the Chevening scholar team, Anton was chosen to represent France in the Commission on Human Rights, although he is actually a native of Russia. This entailed some hard work to get up to speed with French foreign policy, and the whole experience provides a glimpse into the inner workings of international diplomacy». — Stephen Farnsworth — British Chevening Scholarships web-site.

For the essay please refer to [http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/publizistica/model\\_UN\\_eng.html](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/publizistica/model_UN_eng.html) or <http://www.chevening.com>

*Down Broadway Toward ... or the Tragic Events through the Eyes of a Russian Volunteer*, by Anton Burkov, Fellow's Stories. JUSTICE INITIATIVE FELLOWS NEWSLETTER October 14, 2004.

«There are defining moments in the world's recent history. For one generation everybody could tell you where they were and what they were doing when they heard that US President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. For others it was when they heard that Princess Diana had died. For the majority of the world's population today, it was that fateful day in September 2001. For Anton Burkov however the memories do not come from television images». —Stephen Farnsworth — British Chevening Scholarships web-site.

For the essay, please refer to [http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res\\_id=102234](http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res_id=102234) or [http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/articles/down\\_broadway.html](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/articles/down_broadway.html)

### **IN THE MEDIA**

In 2004, Sutyajnik lawyers were interviewed in newspapers; on the radio, radio «Echo of Moscow», and radio «Liberty», and local radio stations; on television, the Sverdlovsk State TV Company, All-Russian TV company, NTV, and regional TV companies.

The interviews can be accessed at [www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/interview](http://www.sutyajnik.ru/rus/library/interview)

### **OUR WEB-SITE**

The NGO Sutyajnik's website is up and running.

In 2004, Sutyajnik continued to develop its website, [www.sutyajnik.ru](http://www.sutyajnik.ru). Almost all the information on our activities is available on-line for the Russian and English speaking audience. The web-site disseminates human rights news from the News Agency Sutyajnik-Press. In our virtual library, one can access all the publications of the organization's attorneys and interns, information on the organisation's cases, projects, and conferences, reports on the human rights situation in the Urals, legal advice, etc. The 2003 and 2002 Annual Reports are posted on the website, as is this Annual Report in Russian and English. Due to the project «INTERNET-CONFERENCE-CENTRE for the Dissemination of Knowledge about International Mechanisms for the Defense of Human Rights», supported by John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation (Moscow), NGO activists are able to hold on-line round tables, conferences and presentations of projects and publications. In addition, video lectures for lawyers and NGO representatives and human rights documentary movies are available on-line. One can also visit the website to see our photos, review published interviews by «sutyajniks,» and find out what we, the press, the Ombudsman of Sverdlovsk Oblast, and the well-known Russian lexicographer, Vladimir Dal, think about Sutyajnik.

## IN CONCLUSION: 2004 IN HIGHLIGHTS

Today there are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Russia, but few are as old as the Russian Constitution or Russian Parliament. The NGO called Sutyajnik, founded at the same time as the new Russian Constitution, has been fighting for human rights protected by that Constitution and by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights from its inception. Entering its second decade on 29 August 2004, NGO Sutyajnik can look with pride on its accomplishments over the past ten years.

Sutyajnik? A Russian would tell you that this word has a doubtful connotation; indeed, some might consider it scandalous. A dictionary might translate *sutyajnik* as: «a person inclined to sue for insufficient reasons» or «a malicious litigator». But we see a «sutyajnik» as a person prepared to use the existing legal institutions and mechanisms to defend his or others' human rights, and to challenge government when it seeks to deny or infringe upon those rights. A «sutyajnik» believes that the Russian Constitution and the European Convention mean what they say about human rights, and will use every legal means at his or her disposal to realize the lofty declarations on human rights found in these documents.

NGO Sutyajnik is a legal services organization established on 29 August 1994 in Yekaterinburg, Russia. All of Sutyajnik's efforts and activities relate to important legal problems that affect the public at large, rather than just one or two individuals. Sutyajnik's efforts are directed towards establishing legal practices that correspond to international standards of human rights protection and the rule of law in civil society.

The members of Sutyajnik are primarily senior law students, working under the leadership of experienced human rights lawyers.

Sutyajnik, the oldest human rights protection organization in the Russian Urals, stands as a shield against arbitrary officialdom. Sergei Beliaev, the president of Sutyajnik, tells News Agency Sutyajnik-Press about the results of the organization's work, about protecting the interests of the «little» man, and about counteracting the powerful administrative machinery of a large city.

### — Sergei Ivanovich, who are lawyers with Sutyajnik? What have lawyers gone on to do after working some time at Sutyajnik?

— During the past decade, several hundred lawyers have passed through Sutyajnik, young men and women studying to become attorneys. They are now working in many spheres including business, policy making and public prosecution. Each of them draws from those experiences they gained during the one to two years at Sutyajnik. At present, about twenty young lawyers are working in our organization. Some of them are still studying, and some are defending dissertations in Russian and foreign universities. Those with university degrees are working here full-time. Some people have worked in the organization for a number of years.

### — Does Sutyajnik coordinate its work with similar human rights organizations from other Russian regions or other countries?

— Certainly. Many of our projects are implemented jointly with other organizations. Specialists from abroad conduct seminars here and share their experiences. Our members receive training abroad. We cooperate with such international organizations as: Interights (London), Central European University (Budapest), Helsinki Fund for Human Rights Protection, and the International Senior Lawyers Project (New York). As far as Russia is concerned, we are known in all corners of the country. We have branches in Vladivostok, Novosibirsk, Tyumen, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy, Voronezh, and Murmansk. Our members participate in the fight for human rights from Vladivostok to St.-Petersburg.

### — Approximately how many people received assistance from your organization? How many cases have you won in the past decade?

— We provided assistance to literally thousands of citizens who requested our assistance. Since 1994, we have provided more than 18 thousand consultations to citizens and non-profit organizations, and we won more than 750 proceedings in the public interest, including the abolition of more than 90 unlawful normative acts of local and federal government. For example, we successfully challenged efforts to keep the public and the press from courtrooms during proceedings; we struck down both local regulations that infringe on the right of assembly to protest government action and illegitimate efforts by executive officers to veto

*It's Time...*

municipal legislation. We secured rulings that state that denials of the right to appeal administrative decisions is a violation of the Russian Constitution and that civil psychiatric detention without a timely hearing violates both the Russian Constitution and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights. In general, I believe, we have done well.

Our plans are to continue sharing our experience with other human rights NGOs and activists, and to continue vigorous efforts to protect human rights in general, not only under our Russian Constitution, but also with the use of international mechanisms of protection that require our presence in the international field.

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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION  
«SUTYAJNIK»

**IT'S TIME...**

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