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**For immediate release**

**European Court: length of Russian criminal proceedings against  
former police officer were excessive**

Today, in the case of *Sukhov v Russia* (No. 32805/03), the European Court of Human Rights found Russia to have violated Article 6(1) (right to a fair trial within a reasonable time) of the European Convention on Human Rights, due to the unreasonably long criminal proceedings against the applicant. Mr Sukhov was represented before the Court by the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre, based at London Metropolitan University, and the Russian NGO, Memorial.

On 21 July 1997, Mr Sukhov was arrested and detained on suspicion of aggravated bribery. He was released on 22 January 1998 and ordered not to leave town. Criminal proceedings against him were repeatedly adjourned and resumed until he finally stood trial on 15 December 2002. Between 15 December 2002 and 10 February 2005, 26 hearings were scheduled for Mr Sukhov's case, although 13 of these were adjourned or cancelled. On 10 February 2005, the Irkutsk Regional Court found Mr Sukhov guilty of bribe-taking and sentenced him to two years' imprisonment. The judgment was upheld by the Supreme Court on 21 July 2005.

In its judgment, the European Court noted that neither party believed the dispute to be particularly difficult to determine. Consequently, the Court found that a period of more than seven years must *prima facie* fall outside the 'reasonable time' requirement of Article 6(1) of the Convention. The Court attributed the vast majority of the delays to failings by the Russian authorities (in particular a re-composition of the Regional Court's bench and the absence of prosecution witnesses) rendering the overall length of the proceedings 'excessive'.

The Court awarded Mr Sukhov €3,600 (euros) in non-pecuniary damages.