

How Russia Betrayed My Son

By [Lyudmila Doronina](#)

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Many people have extended their sympathy to me after the tragic suicide of my son, Alexander Dolmatov, in the Netherlands in January.

His problems began after he participated in the Moscow street protest on May 6. Fearing arrest on trumped-up charges, Sasha fled to the Netherlands. His emotional state of mind became worse after his request for asylum was denied by Dutch authorities. He feared coming back to Russia and facing a biased judicial system that had already arrested more than a dozen innocent protesters.

I have been warned that Sasha's ill-wishers would try to besmirch his good name now that he is no longer with us. I am deeply disturbed by Russian television reports about my son and their particular focus on the last page of his suicide note. He was extremely distressed and tried to sum up his short but impressive life in the note. He wrote of his free lifestyle, but everyone has moments when they see themselves in a bad light, and the same happened to him.

Alexander had a successful career as an engineer in a rocket factory near Moscow. He was

an attentive and thoughtful person. Is there some reason why Sasha should not have been concerned with political developments in society and the lives of his fellow citizens? Such thoughts are natural to every decent person. But it turns out that others lack the same basic decency. Russian television continues to throw mud at him.

I appeal to television journalists and their editors and management who are trying so hard to desecrate the memory of my son: Have some decency and don't engage in an smear campaign against Sasha. He lived according to ideals that are higher than yours. Do not carry out immoral orders from someone above. We can only try to live up to the example Sasha set and the values and principles he tried to protect. This is no easy task in Russia.

While in Russia, Sasha fought for the common good and for basic human values. He loved everyone and never spoke badly about others. He was an earnest person and a deep thinker.

When I was young, I believed that I lived in a happy, progressive and spiritual country, that Russians were kind and generous people. Where has all that gone now? What have we become? Where is our spirituality? Do Russia's leaders wonder why an honest person like Sasha fled the country, someone who had always stood up with pride when he heard the Russian national anthem?

Yes, Sasha was emotional. He loved people and life. The government needs to create conditions that would make honest people like Sasha want to remain in Russia, contribute to society and be happy. This is one reason why government exists: to create the conditions and protections to make people happy.

We have a great country and wonderful people, but tragically there is no place in Russia anymore for people like Sasha. Too many people are more concerned with power and money than spiritual wealth.

Sasha fled the country after the government started cracking down on protesters. Who will take responsibility for what happened there? Sasha always followed the law and his conscience. My son went off to attend a protest march and discovered that a war had been declared against protesters. Whoever in the government was behind this crackdown should take responsibility for their actions. Former Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov is a free man, yet everybody knows what was happening in his ministry. But Sasha, who also worked in the defense industry, was honest and opposed corruption, and he was targeted by the authorities.

What has happened to our conscience, honesty and morals? I want answers from those who forced Sasha to flee. The truth must come out. Russian officials did not even offer me sympathy as I mourned over the loss of my son, yet the Dutch ambassador had the decency to visit me and extend his sincere and heartfelt condolences. In contrast, Russian officials ignored my son's tragedy. They probably say to themselves and others: "Dolmatov left the country and good riddance! We didn't need him anyway." Those who think and say these words are spitting on my soul and desecrating the memory of my son. Is that what Russia has become?

It is a shame that Sasha had to leave his native country. People should think about what forced my son to leave Russia and not about the words he uttered while in a horrible condition that

others, I hope, will never have to experience themselves.

Lyudmila Doronina is the mother of Alexander Dolmatov.

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