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Jailed Chechen Activist Titiyev Given European Human Rights Award

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Oyub Titiyev (Musa Sadulayev / AP / TASS)

The Council of Europe (CoE) has awarded jailed Chechen rights advocate Oyub Titiyev this year's Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize.

Titiyev, who heads the Chechen chapter of the Memorial human rights group, was detained in January on marijuana possession charges that critics dismiss as politically motivated. His trial began in July and is expected to last for several more weeks.

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The CoE announced on Monday that it had awarded Titiyev the 2018 Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize, named after the late president of the Czech Republic.

"The prize is a recognition of the work he and Memorial are doing," the president of the

Strasbourg-based Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE, Liliane Maury Pasquier, said in a statement.

“It is also a message to all those who work in this region to affirm the principles of the rule of law and human rights,” she added.

Memorial head Alexander Cherkasov received the prize for Titiyev. The prominent activist’s award includes 60,000 euros, a trophy and a diploma.

“In my homeland of Chechnya, illegal arrests and the fabrication of criminal cases have long been the norm,” Titiyev wrote in a speech read by Cherkasov which was carried by Memorial’s Telegram channel.

A Turkish judge held in detention for alleged links to a 2016 coup attempt was awarded last year’s Vaclav Havel prize.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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