



President Dmitri Medvedev
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20 January 2009

Re: The Murder of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Barbuurova

Your Excellency,

We strongly condemn the murder of the prominent human rights defender and lawyer Stanislav Markelov and the journalist Anastasia Barbuurova. We consider this a political case and call on the Russian authorities to **conduct an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation** into this and all other political murders in the country.

Stanislav Markelov was the lawyer of the family of Kheda Kungaeva, a young Chechen woman, abducted, raped and strangled in March 2000. Yuri D. Budanov, a former Russian colonel admitted killing her and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Colonel Yuri Budanov was released from prison last week, 18 months early.

On Monday, 19 January, lawyer Markelov was shot dead in Moscow right after a news conference where he announced that he would appeal to the European Court of Human Rights against Budanov's early release. Anastasia Barbuurova, a journalist employed by *Novaya Gazeta*, died Monday night in hospital from wounds sustained in the same attack. Over the last week, and on the day of the murder, Stanislav Markelov received several death threats.

Stanislav Markelov defended numerous victims of human rights abuses in Chechnya. He worked closely with Anna Politkovskaya and was instrumental in the 2005 conviction of a police officer, Sergei Lapin, who was imprisoned for the torture and disappearance of a young Chechen man.

Several critics of the Russian authorities have lost their lives in the past few years. On 13 January 2009, Chechen Umar Israilov who had filed a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights, alleging that Kadyrov had personally tortured him, was shot dead in Vienna. On 5 January 2009, Shafig Amrakhov, editor of the online regional news agency RIA 51, died in a Murmansk hospital after an unidentified assailant shot him in the head a week earlier. Magomed Yevloyev, the owner of Ingushetiya.ru website, which reported on human rights abuses in Ingushetia, was killed in a police car on 31 August 2008. On 7 October 2006, human rights defender and journalist Anna Politkovskaya was killed in Moscow.

We are **concerned about the safety of human rights defenders** in the country and **strongly urge Russia to ensure protection of all human rights defenders and critical voices**, in accordance with Article 1 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 53/144 of 8 March 1999, under the name of the Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which stipulates that "*everyone has the right, individually and in*



association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.”

Sincerely,

Human Rights House Norway (on behalf of the following NGO's):

- Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)
- The Norwegian Helsinki Committee (Norway)
- The Norwegian PEN (Norway)

The Rafto Human Rights House Foundation (Bergen, Norway)

Russian Research Center for Human Rights (on behalf of the following NGO's):

- Human Rights Network Group
- Independent Psychiatric Association of Russia
- Moscow Center for Prison Reform
- Moscow Helsinki Group
- Mother's Rights Foundation
- Organization "Right to Life and Human Dignity"
- Regional Organization "Non-violence International"
- Regional Organization "Right of Child"
- Social Partnership Foundation
- Union of the Soldiers

Human Rights House Sarajevo (on behalf of the following NGO's):

- Association of Female Citizens "Renaissance"
- Foundation CURE
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Regional Co-ordinator for Youth Groups
- Serb Civic Council - Movement for Equality - The Council of the Sarajevo Canton
- Woman and Society Center

Belarusian Human Rights House in exile (Lithuania)

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)

Index on Censorship (UK)

Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety (Azerbaijan)

The Human Rights Center (Georgia)

WARD (Azerbaijan)

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Chairwoman of the Presidential Human Rights Commission of the Russian Federation, Ella Pamfilova, 103132 g. Moskva, Staraya ploshchad, d 8/5,pod 3, Russian Federation, Fax:+70952064855;

Vladimir Lukin, Russian Federal Ombudsman for Human Rights, Fax: +7 495 207-53-37;

Minister of Internal Affairs, Rashid Nurgaliev, ul. Zhitnaya, 16, 117049 Moscow, Russian Federation, Telegram: Rossiia, 117049, Moskva, Fax: + 7 095 237 49 25;

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl, 32/34, 121200 Moscow, Russian Federation, Telegram: Fax:+ 7 095 244 2203;

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