

URGENT ACTION

LAWYERS IN DAGESTAN RECEIVE DEATH THREATS

Two lawyers in Dagestan in the North Caucasus, Russia, have received death threats in connection with a criminal case they are working on.

Sapiyat Magomedova and **Musa Suslanov** are criminal defence lawyers (*advokaty*) working in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, Russia. They have both received threats in connection with their work on a high-profile case in which they are representing the families of five men killed in March 2012.

On 19 May, Musa Suslanov received a text message from an unknown mobile phone number telling him and his colleague to withdraw from the case. The message ended, "We are warning you! This is a chance to stay alive". The next day Sapiyat Magomedova also received a text message from the same number ordering, in derogative language, her and her colleague to "remove yourselves from the case ... keep out of where you should not be". They have since received further threats of physical violence, arson attacks and bombing of the building where they work if they do not halt their work on behalf of the victims of the case.

The two lawyers have submitted official complaints to the authorities asking that the threats be investigated. They also requested that the investigation of the killing be transferred to a higher, federal level to ensure impartiality. Earlier, the case had been transferred to the North Caucasus Federal District, but was soon demoted again.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language urging the Russian authorities to:

- Investigate promptly, effectively and impartially the death threats which the lawyers have received, and ensure that those found responsible are brought to justice;
- Ensure the safety and security of lawyers Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov in accordance with their wishes;
- Ensure that all lawyers in Russia are able to perform their professional duties without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference in accordance with the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 JULY 2013 TO:

Chairman of the Investigative Committee
of the Russian Federation

Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Investigative Committee of the Russian
Federation
Tekhnicheskii pereulok, d.2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 499 265 9077

Salutation: Dear Chairman

President of the Chamber of Lawyers of
the Russian Federation

Yevgenii Vasilyevich Semenyanko
Chamber of Lawyers of the Russian
Federation
Sivtsev Vrazhek, d.43
119002 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 787 2836

Email: advpalata@mail.ru
Salutation: Dear President

And copies to:

Prosecutor General of the Russian
Federation

Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
Prosecutor General's Office
ul. B Dmitrovka, d.15a
125993 Moscow GSP-3
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 987 5841

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov have both worked on cases involving corruption and allegations of human rights violations by members of law enforcement agencies, and have received repeated threats in connection to their work.

Human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment are regularly reported from the North Caucasus. The Russian authorities systematically fail to investigate such violations effectively and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Criminal defence lawyers who represent victims of such violations, as well as lawyers defending individuals suspected of membership of armed groups, particularly those who report torture of criminal suspects, are often subjected to intimidation, harassment, improper interference and reprisals in connection with their work. On repeated occasions in recent years Amnesty International has raised concern in connection with death threats and physical violence which lawyers in the region have faced. Sapiyat Magomedova, in particular, has already been the subject of an Urgent Action (see EUR 46/033/2011 <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/033/2011/en>) after she was assaulted by police officials and, after complaining and demanding an investigation into this incident, faced criminal prosecution herself.

In March 2013, Amnesty International published a report *Confronting the circle of injustice: threats and pressure faced by lawyers in the North Caucasus* (AI Index: EUR 46/003/2013) which documents an atmosphere of intimidation and harassment of criminal defence lawyers in the region, and highlights numerous cases of threats and physical violence by members of law enforcement agencies against lawyers in the North Caucasus in connection with their professional activities.

Principle 16 of the Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers states that “governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.” Also, “[w]here the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities” (Principle 17).

Name: Musa Suslanov (m) and Sapiyat Magomedova (f)
Gender m/f: Both

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