

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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France: Concern over possible poisoning of Russian human rights lawyer

Amnesty International expressed concern today that Karinna Moskalkenko and her family may have been the victims of mercury poisoning. The organization was worried that she was targeted for her activities as a human rights lawyer and welcomed the opening of the criminal investigation by the French authorities into the possible poisoning of Karinna Moskalkenko and her family.

According to Karinna Moskalkenko, on 12 October a number of small liquid metallic balls were found in her car in Strasbourg, France, where she lives part time. The balls were discovered under the floor mats on both the driver's and the passenger's side, as well as stuck under the floor cover in other places of the car. A criminal case has been opened by the French police who are investigating the incident.

Karinna Moskalkenko told Amnesty International that she and one of her sons have been suffering from nausea, dizziness and headaches in the last few days. The family have undergone medical tests, the full results of which are not yet available.

Amnesty International said that Karinna Moskalkenko may have been targeted for her activities as a human rights lawyer. She acts as one of the legal representatives of the family of murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. On 15 October she was due to take part in the preliminary hearing of the case but had to stay in France due to the incident. She is also a member of the legal defence team of former YUKOS oil company head Mikhail Khodorkovskii, currently imprisoned in Russia. Hearing of his parole appeal took place on 15 and 16 October in Chita, Russia. Karinna Moskalkenko and her team of lawyers have won around 30 cases taken by Russian citizens against the Russian government before the European Court of Human Rights.

Amnesty International looks forward to a prompt and thorough investigation by the French authorities into the incident, with a view to ascertaining whether Karinna Moskalkenko and her family have been targeted by a criminal act. Should this be the case, those responsible should be brought to justice

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