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Justice for Anna Politkovskaya

The Russian government must protect human rights defenders

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[Photo caption]

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The brutal murder of Anna Politkovskaya has highlighted the terrible dangers of defending human rights in the Russian Federation. Yet the government seems impervious to calls to end its targeting of independent journalists and human rights activists and to demonstrate support and provide protection for human rights defenders.

A fearless journalist and dedicated human rights activist, Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in Moscow on 7 October 2006. Her death was almost certainly linked to her work exposing human rights abuses. Her coverage of the conflict in Chechnya had won her numerous awards, and she had written extensively about violence in the army, state corruption and police brutality.

Intimidation and harassment by the Russian and Chechen authorities did not stop with her death. In Ingushetia, a vigil on 16 October was broken up violently and its organizers were detained and fined.

Actions across the globe....

Anna Politkovskaya worked closely with Amnesty International (AI) on several occasions, and won AI-UK's Global Award for Human Rights Journalism in 2001. Following her death, AI members honoured her memory at vigils in France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, the UK and the USA. Tens of thousands of people worldwide have signed petitions to President Vladimir Putin calling for an effective investigation into her murder. AI members have signed letters and cards, and lobbied their own governments, about the hazards for human rights defenders in Russia. They have organized debates and public hearings in Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, the UK and the USA.

Far from honouring the work of human rights defenders, the Russian government, which faces little opposition in parliament, the judiciary and the mainstream news media, has targeted independent civil society activists. A new 2006 law to control the funding and activities of non-governmental organizations was used to close the Russian Chechen Friendship Society – which had been monitoring human rights abuses in Chechnya – following a series of legal actions against the group by the authorities. Suspicious deaths such as that of investigative journalist Ivan Safronov in March 2007 fuel fears that criminals acting with or without the knowledge of the authorities still operate with impunity.

[Map]

[Photo captions]

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Amsterdam, Netherlands

Washington, USA

London, UK

Seville, Spain

Paris, France

Bologna, Italy

Munich, Germany

Tokyo, Japan

Chechnya, Russian Federation

Helsinki, Finland

Oslo, Norway

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Keep up the campaigning

International campaigning does make a difference. Following the international outcry about the killing of Anna Politkovskaya, in November 2006 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe agreed to monitor attacks on journalists and the progress made by governments in investigating such attacks. The President of the European Commission also used the occasion of the EU-Russia Summit in November to raise the concerns of European Union governments about the murder.

What you can do

Call on the Russian government to:

- ensure a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya
- bring to justice those responsible for her killing, including those who ordered it
- declare public support for the work of human rights defenders and commitment to end impunity for those who attack and threaten them

Send your appeals to:

Vladimir Vladimirovich PUTIN, President of the Russian Federation, Rossiiskaia Federatsia,
103132 g. Moskva, 4 Staraya Square, Prezidentu Rossiiskoi Federatsii, PUTINU V. V.
Fax +7 (495) 606-51-73

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Join Amnesty International's campaign

More information about the Russian Federation and how to contact AI in your country can be found at:

- Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House,
1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DJ, United Kingdom
- the address in the box below, if there is one
- www.amnesty.org

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights. It is independent of any government, political persuasion or religious creed.

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

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