

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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Russian Federation: Amnesty International condemns murder of human rights journalist Anna Politkovskaia

Amnesty International is shocked, saddened and deeply angered by the murder of Anna Politkovskaia, Russian human rights defender and journalist.

Amnesty International believes that Anna Politkovskaia was targeted because of her work as a journalist, reporting on human rights abuses in Chechnya and other regions of the Russian Federation.

"Amnesty International is appalled by the murder of Anna Politkovskaia," said Nicola Duckworth, Director of the organization's Europe and Central Asia Programme. "Russia has lost a brave and dedicated human rights defender, who spoke out fearlessly against violence and injustice, and campaigned tirelessly to see justice done."

Amnesty International calls on the Russian authorities to investigate her murder thoroughly and impartially, to make the findings of the investigation public and for suspected perpetrators to be brought to justice in accordance with international law.

Amnesty International also urges the government of the Russian Federation to take urgent steps to ensure that all human rights defenders and independent journalists in Russia, including those working in the North Caucasus region, are able to carry out their activities in safety and without fear of harassment or intimidation.

Amnesty International extends its deepest sympathy to Anna Politkovskaia's family.

Background

According to media reports, a police official stated that a neighbour had found Anna Politkovskaia shot dead in a lift in the block of flats where she lived in Moscow at 5.10pm on 7 October 2006. According to the reports, the office of the procurator has opened a criminal investigation into "premeditated murder".

Russian journalist and human rights defender Anna Politkovskaia had reported about the human rights situation in Chechnya since 1999 for the newspaper Novaia Gazeta (New Newspaper). Her fearless and dedicated coverage of the conflict had been acknowledged through numerous awards including the Global Award for Human Rights Journalism from Amnesty International UK in 2001. She had also written extensively about abuses in other parts of Russia such as violence in the army, corruption in state structures, and police brutality.

Anna Politkovskaia faced intimidation and harassment from the Russian and Chechen authorities due to her outspoken criticism of government policy and action. She had been detained and threatened with serious reprisals for her reporting on several occasions, including being detained in June 2004 for several hours in Tsenteroi, Chechnya, at the house of Ramzan Kadyrov, now Prime Minister of Chechnya, where she says she was verbally abused and threatened. She was also reportedly prevented from travelling to Beslan, North Ossetia, in September 2004 during the hostage crisis there; she believed she had been deliberately poisoned on a plane from Moscow to Rostov-on-Don when she lost consciousness after drinking a cup of tea on the flight.

Public Document

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