

# URGENT ACTION

## PROTECT DAGESTANI LAWYERS FROM HARASSMENT

**Two lawyers in the North Caucasus Republic of Dagestan, Russia, face renewed threats in relation to their work on a high profile murder case. One of them has also been subjected to a lawsuit in connection with her work.**

Lawyers **Sapiyat Magomedova** and **Musa Suslanov** faced renewed threats they claim to be connected to their work. Between 20 and 25 November unknown men followed both lawyers. Sapiyat Magomedova told Amnesty International that suspicious cars were parked in front of the law firm and her house in the city of Khasavyut. On 20 November a car followed her when she was travelling in her automobile through the city.

On 22 October, the Ministry of the Interior of Dagestan submitted a lawsuit against Sapiyat Magomedova for an article published by the independent online news agency Kavkazskiy Uzel in September 2013 in which Sapiyat Magomedova is quoted saying that policemen in Khasavyut had tortured one of her clients in prison. While the article has been displayed on the publication's website for more than a year, in the lawsuit the Ministry of Interior requests Sapiyat Magomedova to publically retract the allegations of torture in order to protect the "honour", "dignity" and "professional reputation" of the policemen. The Ministry relies on Articles 151 "Compensation of moral harm" and 152 "Protection of the honour, dignity and professional reputation" of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation to justify this demand. The Ministry further argues that according to Russian law, a person is innocent until guilt is proven and that the prosecution refused to open a criminal case against the policemen, who according to Sapiyat Magomedova allegedly had used torture. Hearings on the case against Sapiyat Mogamedova continue.

### Please write immediately in Russian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to promptly, effectively and impartially investigate the threats made against Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov;
- Urging them to ensure the safety and security of Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov and ensure that they 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;
- Calling on the Ministry of Interior to drop its lawsuit and to ensure that article 151 and 152 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation are not abused to prevent criticism of public officials or institutions or to prevent reporting of allegations of human rights violations.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JANUARY 2014 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**

Chairman of the Investigative Committee  
of the Region of Dagestan

Eduard Valer'evich Kabuneev,  
pr. Imama Shamilya, d. 70  
Makhachkala, 367015  
Republic of Dagestan, Russian  
Federation  
Fax: +7 872 262 0507

**Salutation: Dear Chairman**

**And copies to:**

Prosecutor General

Yurii Chaika  
Bolshaia Dmitrovka 15 A,  
125993 Moscow  
Russian Federation  
Fax: +7 495 692 17 25  
Email: prgenproc@gov.ru

**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 147/13. Further information:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/034/2014/en>

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



# URGENT ACTION

## PROTECT DAGESTANI LAWYERS FROM HARASSMENT

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment are regularly reported in the North Caucasus. The Russian authorities systematically fail to investigate such violations effectively and bring the perpetrators to justice. In Dagestan, 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 faced by lawyers in the region. In March 2013, Amnesty International published the 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.

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 a long history of being subjected to threats and harassment relating to their work. Sapiyat Magomedova told Amnesty International that she was beaten by police officials and forcibly removed from the police station in the town of Khasavyurt when she went there to visit a detained client in June 2010. Amnesty International has seen medical records confirming that she suffered head-injuries and bruising in her chest. Following her official complaint and demands for an investigation into the incident, a criminal prosecution was initiated against her, based on police officials' counterclaims (see UA 219/10 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/037/2010/en> and further information on UA 219/10 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR46/033/2011/en>).

Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov continued to receive threats, especially after they began their work on a high-profile case of five men killed in March 2012. Such threats included SMS and social media messages in which unknown senders would threaten them with physical violence (see UA 147/13 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/016/2013/en> and update <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/034/2014/en>).

According to the lawyers, there has been no effective, if any, investigation of their complaints in relation to the threats. An investigation was reopened earlier this year into Sapiyat Magomedova's beating, but in spite of her queries to the authorities, she has not been informed about any progress of the investigations and believes that there has been none.

Principle 16 of the Basic UN 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: Sapiyat Magomedova (f), Musa Suslanov (m)  
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 147/13 Index: EUR 46/053/2014 Issue Date: 9 December 2014