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## **Russian Federation: Human rights lawyer murdered**

Amnesty International strongly condemns the murder of lawyer and human rights defender Stanislav Markelov. He was shot dead today in the centre of Moscow as he prepared to appeal again against the early release of a Russian former colonel sentenced for the murder of a Chechen girl. A journalist from the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* was killed in the same attack.

“Stanislav Markelov is yet another victim -- very possibly murdered for his professional and courageous work to defend human rights,” said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

Amnesty International expresses sympathy for the family of Stanislav Markelov and urges the Russian authorities to investigate the murder promptly, fully and objectively.

Among high profile cases he worked on, Stanislav Markelov was the lawyer of the family of Chechen girl Kheda Kungaeva, who was abducted, raped and strangled to death in March 2000. Colonel Yuri Budanov was sentenced for the murder. He was released early on 15 January 2009 despite the appeal filed by Stanislav Markelov. Over the last week, Stanislav Markelov had received numerous death threats for his work on behalf of the family of Kheda Kungaeva.

“Stanislav Markelov’s murder is a despicable crime. The Russian authorities must take decisive steps to show that such crimes will not be tolerated. Silencing those who defend human rights and work to uphold the rule of law is absolutely unacceptable,” Nicola Duckworth said.

### **Background**

Amnesty International has worked with Stanislav Markelov on several cases, defending those whose human rights had been violated. In 2004, the organization campaigned on his behalf after he had been attacked, beaten and had documents stolen relating to his work on behalf of the family of Zelimkhan Murdalov, a young Chechen man, who was subjected to torture and enforced disappearance by Russian law enforcement official Sergei Lapin. Stanislav Markelov was also working on behalf of anti-fascists who had become victims of hate crime.