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Another lawyer killed in Dagestan: The Russian authorities must find Magomed Guchuchaliev's killers and bring them to justice

In the evening of 12 July 2013, lawyer Magomed Guchuchaliev was repeatedly shot at, and killed, by two men near his home in the suburbs of Makhachkala, the capital the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan. Magomed Guchuchaliev was on the way to the mosque for a Friday evening prayer. The identity of his killers is unknown.

Amnesty International is extremely concerned by the intimidation and threats which criminal defence lawyers in the North Caucasus often receive from members of law enforcement agencies and unknown individuals, and has documented and reported numerous incidents of physical violence to which representatives of the legal community in the region have been subjected in recent years, including the killing of another lawyer in Dagestan in 2012.

Until September 2012, Magomed Guchuchaliev was the chair of the law firm Kavkaz (*advokatskaya kollegiya 'Kavkaz'*). For years, members of this firm have been receiving threats in connection with their professional activities, and have faced harassment by members of the authorities. Magomed Guchuchaliev's colleague, Konstantin Mudunov, survived an attempt on his life on 19 November 2008. On 20 January 2012, another member of the law firm Kavkaz, lawyer Omar Saidmagomedov, and his cousin were killed by security officials in a street of Makhachkala. The authorities reported this as a killing of two members of an armed group, although there are strong allegations that the lawyer was targeted in connection with his work and extrajudicially executed. These allegations have never been effectively investigated. The subsequent attempts by Omar Saidmagomedov's colleagues to ensure that the authorities impartially investigate his death encountered resistance and led to them themselves being harassed by investigation officials (for more details of this killing and harassment of the law firm Kavkaz, and of the atmosphere of constant intimidation and of physical attacks of criminal defence lawyers in the North Caucasus, see Amnesty International's report *Russia: Confronting the circle of injustice threats and pressure faced by lawyers in the North Caucasus*, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/003/2013/en>). In spring 2012, Magomed Guchuchaliev himself spoke of threats he had been receiving. In March 2012, his house was searched by members of law enforcement agencies but nothing illegal was found.

Colleagues of Magomed Guchuchaliev told Amnesty International that his killing may be related to his work, but may also be a form of pressure on his son Sirazhudun whom the authorities detained earlier this year as a suspected member of an armed group. According to a lawyer representing Sirazhudun Guchuchaliev, he is being routinely denied access to his client, in contravention of Russian and international human rights law. However, during a brief meeting which the lawyer had with Sirazhudun Guchuchaliev before his father's killing, he complained of pressure and threats, including of a warning that unless he gave the testimony required by the investigation his father and other relatives would suffer.

The Russian authorities must ensure that criminal justice lawyers in the North Caucasus are able to perform their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference. Amnesty International is calling on the local and federal authorities to investigate promptly and effectively Magomed Guchuchaliev's killing, identify those who masterminded and committed it, and bring them to justice. All previous attacks and threats against lawyers in the North Caucasus too, must be investigated promptly and impartially, and their perpetrators brought to justice.

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