

Dr. Beatrix Karl, Federal Minister of Justice  
Ministry of Justice,  
Republic of Austria

## **Austria should demand the extradition of murder suspect sheltered by Russia**

Dear Dr. Karl,

(Berlin, London, Oslo, Paris, Stockholm, Vienna 6 June, 2012.) 1 June 2011, a year ago last week, three men were convicted by the Vienna Landesgericht to long prison sentences for the killing of Chechen exile Umar Israilov, who was shot on the streets of Vienna in January 2009. The deed was carried out "on behalf of a foreign power", according to the Austrian court.

Israilov was a critic of the Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov, whom he claimed was personally responsible for numerous crimes, including torture and murder. Israilov had lodged an application with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, despite having received numerous threats. The killing was one of several murders of rivals and critics of Russian and Chechen authorities outside of Russia.

The three men of Chechen origin had links to Chechen authorities, including President Kadyrov himself, and were convicted of killing Israilov during a botched attempt to kidnap him. The decision of the Austrian court was made possible by meticulous work of the Austrian police and investigators, and represents a milestone in the decade-long effort to end impunity connected to the conflict in Chechnya.

Yet the man who allegedly fired the fatal shots, Russian national Lecha Bogatyrov, a former member of a Chechen paramilitary force loyal to Russian authorities, remains a fugitive of justice. Moreover, Mr. Bogatyrov appears to enjoy a high standing with Chechen and Russian authorities. He was reportedly appointed chief of a special police unit in a Chechen village on his return from Austria. A request by the Austrian court to interview as witnesses him and four other Chechens connected to the murder trial, including Mr. Kadyrov, has not been answered by the Russian justice authorities.

Austrian authorities should not passively stand by this apparently deliberate attempt at obstructing justice by Russian authorities. The undersigned organizations have worked with documenting human rights abuses and crimes against humanity in Chechnya, and monitored the Israilov trial as it unfolded. In our view, the Israilov trial is among the most important human rights cases in Europe of the last years.

Even though the Austrian court decision was a milestone, the Israilov case is not finished as long as a key suspect remains at large and the many questions as to who ordered, commissioned, funded, aided and abetted the killing are unanswered. We therefore urge you, as the highest political authority of the Austrian justice system, to request the extradition of Mr. Lecha Bogatyrov from the Russian Federation.

Although Austria does not have an extradition treaty with Russia, the Austrian government has numerous bilateral dealings with Russia, and Russia is a member of the Council of Europe, an organization committed to rule of law and human rights. The current impunity for Mr. Israilov's alleged killer should be treated as a political issue, and we urge you to engage in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Joachim Frank

Chair

Austrian Helsinki Association

Robert Hardh

Executive Director

Civil Rights Defenders

Wolfgang Kaleck

General Secretary

European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights

Hugh Williamson

Director of Europe/Central Asia Div.

Human Rights Watch

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President

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Bjørn Engesland

Secretary General

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