

Aleksandr Bastrykin
Head of the Investigative Committee of Russian Federation
The Investigative Committee of Russian Federation
105005, Russia, Moscow,
Technicheskii Lane, 2

Sunday 2 November 2014

Dear Mr Bastrykin,

RE: Request for investigation into the murder of Akhmednabi Akhmednabiyev to be transferred to the Central Investigative Department of the Russian Federation's Investigative Committee.

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (2 November) we, the undersigned organisations, are calling upon you, in your position as Head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, to help end the cycle of impunity for attacks on those who exercise their right to free expression in Russia.

We are deeply concerned regarding the failure of the Russian authorities to protect journalists in violation of international human rights standards and Russian law. We are highlighting the case of **Akhmednabi Akhmednabiyev**, a Russian independent journalist who was shot dead in July 2013 as he left for work in Makhachkala, Dagestan. In his work as deputy editor of independent newspaper *Novoye Delo*, and a reporter for online news portal Caucasian Knot, Akhmednabiyev, 51, had actively reported on human rights violations against Muslims by the police and Russian army.

His death came six months after a previous assassination attempt carried out in a similar manner in January 2013. That attempt was wrongly logged by the police as property damage, and was only reclassified after the journalist's death. This shows a shameful failure to investigate the motive behind the attack and prevent further attacks, despite a request from Akhmednabiyev for protection. The journalist had faced previous threats, including in 2009, when his name was on a hit-list circulating in Makhachkala, which also featured Khadjimurad Kamalov, who was gunned down in December 2011. The government's failure to address these threats is a breach of the State's "positive obligation" to protect an individual's freedom of expression against attacks, as defined by European Court of Human Rights case law (*Dink v. Turkey*).

A year after Akhmednabiyev's killing, with neither the perpetrators nor instigators identified, the investigation was suspended in July 2014. As well as ensuring impunity for his murder, such action sets a terrible precedent for future investigations into attacks on journalists in Russia. ARTICLE 19 joined the campaign to have his case reopened, and made a call for the Russian authorities to act during the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) session in September 2014. During the session, HRC members, including Russia, adopted a resolution on safety of journalists and ending impunity. States are now required to take a number of measures aimed at ending impunity for violence against journalists, including "*ensuring impartial, speedy, thorough, independent and effective investigations, which seek to bring to justice the masterminds behind attacks*".

While the Dagestani branch of the Investigative Committee has now reopened the case, as of September 2014, more needs to be done in order to ensure impartial, independent and effective investigation. We are therefore calling on you to raise Akhmednabiyev's case to the Office for the investigation of particularly important cases involving crimes against persons and public safety, under the Central Investigative Department of the Russian Federation's Investigative Committee.

Sadly, Akhmednabiyev's case is only one of many where impunity for murder remains. The investigations into the murders of journalists **Khadjimurad Kamalov** (2011), **Natalia Estemirova** (2009) and **Mikhail Beketov** (who died in 2013, from injuries sustained in a violent attack in 2008), amongst others have stalled.

The failure to bring both the perpetrators and instigators of these attacks to justice is contributing to a climate of impunity in the country, and poses a serious threat to freedom of expression.

Cases of violence against journalists must be investigated in an independent, speedy and effective manner and those at risk provided with immediate protection.

Yours Sincerely,

ARTICLE 19

Amnesty International

Albanian Media Institute

Association of Independent Electronic Media (Serbia)

Azerbaijan Human Rights Centre

Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

Center for National and International Studies (Azerbaijan)

Civic Assistance Committee (Russia)

Civil Society and Freedom of Speech Initiative Center for the Caucasus

Committee to Protect Journalists

Glasnost Defence Foundation (Russia)

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor (Armenia)

Helsinki Committee of Armenia

Human Rights House Foundation

Human Rights Monitoring Institute (Lithuania)

Human Rights Movement "Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"

Memorial (Russia)

Moscow Helsinki Group

Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Index on Censorship

International Partnership for Human Rights

International Press Institute

International Youth Human Rights Movement

IREX Europe

Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law

Kharkiv Regional Foundation - Public Alternative (Ukraine)

PEN International

Public Verdict Foundation (Russia)

Reporters without Borders

The Kosova Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims

World Press Freedom Committee

cc.

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