

Brief Introduction

Natalia Estemirova, one of the leading human rights defenders who worked in the North Caucasus region, was abducted in Grozny, Chechnya on July 15th on her way to work. She was dragged into a car by several men and driven off in an unknown direction. According to witnesses, Natalia Estemirova managed to shout out that she was being abducted. Her body was found several hours later in the neighboring Republic of Ingushetia with gunshot wounds to the head and chest.

Targets:

Ambassador Sergey I. KISLYAK
Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20007
FAX: 1 202 298 5735
EMAIL: Russianembassy@mindspring.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice, Russian Federation
Aleksandr KONOVALOV
Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation
ul. Zhitnaia, 14
119991 Moscow GSP-1
Russian Federation
FAX: 011 7 495 955 5779
EMAIL: cos@minjust.ru
Salutation: Dear Minister

Ombudsman for Human Rights, Russian Federation
Vladimir Petrovich LUKIN
ul. Miasnitskaia, 47
107084 Moscow
Russian Federation
FAX: 011 7 495 607 74 70
EMAIL: press-sl@ropnet.ru
Salutation: Dear Ombudsman

Letter sample:

Dear _____:

I am writing to express my shock and extreme alarm at the recent murder of human rights defender Natalia Estemirova. I call for your immediate attention to this outrageous crime and for doing everything to guarantee a thorough investigation of this killing. Every effort must be made to bring those responsible to justice.

Amnesty International believes that Natalia Estemirova was murdered due to her professional human rights activities. She was a courageous woman who had investigated and reported human rights abuses in Chechnya, such as torture and other ill-treatment, unlawful killings and enforced disappearances and had provided assistance to displaced and disadvantaged people. The murder of Natalia Estemirova sheds further light on the precarious circumstances in which human rights defenders work in the Russian Federation. It follows the killings earlier this year of human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, journalist Anastasia Baburova, and Anna Politkovskaya in 2006.

President Dmitry Medvedev's expressed outrage at Natalia Estemirova's murder and his concerns that this killing could be related to her human rights activities, and ordered the investigation at the highest level. I urge you to guarantee that this terrible killing is thoroughly investigated in line with internationally recognized standards. I call for an end of impunity for the murder of human rights defenders in Russia and for their full protection under Russian and international law. Human rights violations in Russia should no longer be ignored.

I would appreciate your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Background Information:

In April this year the Russian authorities announced the end of the Anti-Terrorist Operation in Chechnya. However, in the North Caucasus in recent months there have been a number of high-profile killings amid signs that tensions in the region are on the rise.

In a report published earlier this month, [*Rule without law: Human rights violations in the North Caucasus*](#), Amnesty International called for full accountability for the human rights violations that have taken place as the only way to bring about real stability and a return to civil peace in Chechnya and the North Caucasus.

Natalia Estemirova's work was crucial in documenting human rights violations in the region, such as torture and other ill-treatment, unlawful killings and enforced disappearances, since the start of the second Chechnya war in 2000.

Her work has been recognized both at home and internationally by numerous awards, including the Robert Schuman medal of the European Parliament (2005), the Right Livelihood Award of the Swedish Parliament (2004 - the so-called Alternative Nobel Peace Prize), and she was the first recipient of the Anna Politkovskaya Award (2007).