

President of the Russian Federation
Dmitry Anatolievich Medvedev
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

via Fax: 011-7-495-9102134

Dear President Medvedev,

I am deeply concerned about the murder in October 2006 of Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist and human rights defender in Moscow. Anna Politkovskaya faced intimidation and harassment from the Russian federal and Chechen authorities due to her outspoken criticism of government policy and action including in relation to the conflict in Chechnya. She had been detained and threatened with serious reprisals for her reporting on several occasions. The murder of Anna Politkovskaya silenced one of the few journalists working in the country who have dared to expose human rights violations in the Russian Federation.

I welcome the statement from the Russian Investigative Agency that Rustam Makhmudov was detained on 31 May in Chechnya and charged two days later for the murder of Anna Politkovskaya. I urge you to consider his arrest an important step towards ending impunity for crimes committed against those who speak out against human rights violations in Chechnya and the North Caucasus in general. In addition, I call for concrete steps to be taken to ensure a full, thorough and fair trial proceeding that meet international standards for Rustam Makhmudov and any alleged accomplices.

I strongly urge you to demonstrate a strong commitment to protect journalists and human rights defenders from violence. An important step toward achieving this is to fully comply with their international commitments on freedom of expression and freedom of association. Specifically, I ask you to review the too broad legislation on extremism, which can be used to harass human rights defenders and independent journalists, to further review the Law on NGOs, and to review application of the Law on Meetings, Rallies, Demonstrations, Marchers and Pickets, which is often used to restrict the freedom of assembly in Russia.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

copy to:

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