

Dmitriyu Anatolievichu Medvedevu
President of the Russian Federation
ul. Ilyinka, No 23
103132 Moscow
Russian Federation

Oslo, January 19th 2010

Your Excellency, Mr Medvedev,

Today we commemorate the 1st anniversary of the killings of the prominent Russian human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov and the journalist of Novaya Gazeta Anastasia Baburova in the centre of Moscow. We would like to express our sorrow to close relatives and colleagues of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova.

In November 2009 the Russian Main Investigation Directorate (GSU) and Investigating Committee of the Russian Federation (SKP RF) detained Nikita Tikhonov and Eugenia Khasis, both former members of the organization "Russian National Unity" as suspected in killing Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova. We hope that the innocence of the suspected will be preserved until their guilt may be proved.


Unfortunately, the killings of the 19th of January 2009 are part of a pattern, which started with the murder of the prominent journalist Anna Politkovskaya on 7th October 2006 and has escalated during 2009. We are especially worried about the growing numbers of abuses against critical voices, prominent journalists and human rights activists. The ones still working in the field are threatened, kidnapped or caused for defamation.

Persecution of human rights defenders or independent journalists for their criticism of the authorities amounts to harassment and contradicts Russia's commitments made as a party to international human rights treaties. In October 2009 the UN Committee on Human Rights expresses its concerns in its concluding observations about alarming incidence of threats, violent assaults and murders of journalists and human rights defenders in Russia. According to the Committee, this has created "a climate of fear and a chilling effect on the media, including for those working in the North Caucasus, and regrets the lack of effective measures taken to protect the right to life and security of these persons."

We urge you to ensure that the Russian authorities:

- carry out a full, thorough and impartial investigation of the killings of Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova, and bring all those found responsible, including those who ordered the killings, to justice;
- guarantee that the trials are conducted in accordance with international standards for fair trial, and that neither the suspects nor the witnesses are subjected to moral or physical pressure during the investigations;
- assure that the trials are open to the public;
- protect and guarantee the security of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists, and make sure they can do their work without hindrance as stated in the UN Declaration on Human Rights defenders

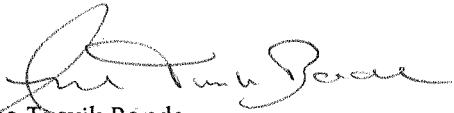
Yours sincerely,



Bjørn Engesland,
General Secretary, The Norwegian Helsinki Committee



John Peder Egenæs,
General Secretary, Amnesty International Norway



Ane Tusvik-Bonde,
Regional Manager, Human Rights House Foundation

Copy:

Russian Embassy, Oslo
Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence in the Norwegian Parliament