

**Murder of human rights activists in Russia**

**European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2009 on the murder of human rights activists in Russia**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia, and in particular to those of 25 October 2006 on the murder of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya<sup>1</sup> and of 18 December 2008 on attacks on human rights defenders in Russia and the Anna Politkovskaya murder trial<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the declaration by the Presidency of the Council on behalf of the European Union of 12 August 2009 on the murders of Chechen human rights defender Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband Alik Dzhabrailov,
  - having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation, which entered into force in 1997 and has been extended pending its replacement by a new agreement,
  - having regard to the ongoing negotiations for a new agreement providing a new comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations,
  - having regard to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the United Nations (UN) Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
  - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas as a member of the Council of Europe and of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Russia has committed itself to the protection and promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law,
  - B. whereas enhanced cooperation and good-neighbourly relations between the EU and Russia are of key importance to the stability, security and prosperity of the whole of Europe,
  - C. whereas the EU is aiming for a strategic partnership with Russia based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law,
  - D. whereas there is an alarming deterioration of the situation of human rights defenders, particularly in the North Caucasus,
  - E. whereas the work of human rights organisations such as Memorial and Demos is essential for the creation of a stable and free society; whereas the Russian Government should therefore be proud of the important role played by such institutions,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 313 E, 20.12.2006, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 58 E, 12.3.2009, p. 180.

- F. whereas the human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, who had also represented the assassinated journalist Anna Politkovskaya, was assassinated on 20 January 2009 together with the journalist Anastasia Barbuova, who died trying to protect Mr Markelov,
- G. whereas on 10 July 2009, the body of human rights activist Andrei Kulagin was found in a quarry in Petrozavodsk, two months after his disappearance,
- H. whereas Natalia Estemirova, head of Memorial in Chechnya, was abducted, on 15 July 2009 in Grozny and found dead in neighbouring Ingushetia; whereas the European Parliament held a minute's silence in memory of Natalia Estemirova during its session on 16 July 2009; whereas following this murder the work of Memorial in Chechnya has been suspended,
- I. whereas a trial for defamation is due to start in September 2009 in Moscow, on the basis of a complaint lodged by Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov against Oleg Orlov, Head of the Memorial Human Rights Centre, for slander following Mr Orlov's statement published on Memorial's website on 15 July 2009 in which he accused President Kadyrov of being involved in Natalia Estemirova's killing,
- J. whereas on 10 August 2009, Chechen civil society activists Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband, Alik Dzhabrailov, working for the humanitarian organisation 'Save the Generation', were abducted from their office in Grozny and found murdered the next day,
- K. whereas on 4 December 2008, the St Petersburg offices of the Research and Information Centre Memorial were raided by masked men from the Russian General Prosecutor's Office, and hard drives and CDs containing the entire database covering thousands of victims of the Stalinist repression were taken away; whereas the database was returned to Memorial following a court order,
- L. whereas on 3 September 2009 the apartment buildings where Oleg Orlov, Head of the Memorial Human Rights Centre, and his collaborator Alexander Tcherkassov, have their private homes, were inspected by government investigators pretending to work for the tax authority,
- M. whereas on 3 September 2009, two months after it ordered the retrial of three suspects acquitted in February this year, Russia's Supreme Court ordered a new investigation into the 2006 murder of Anna Politkovskaya,
- N. whereas numerous complaints have been lodged by Russian citizens at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg,
1. Unreservedly condemns and strongly deplors the harassment and attacks on the lives of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists in Russia;
  2. Urges the Russian authorities to do everything in their power to ensure the protection of human rights defenders, as affirmed in the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; calls in particular on the responsible authorities to create circumstances that allow Memorial and other human rights organisations to resume their activities in Chechnya in a safe environment; welcomes the return of the confiscated archive of Memorial in St Petersburg following the raid on 4 December 2008;

3. Calls on the Russian federal authorities to swiftly, thoroughly and effectively investigate the murders cited above and bring both those responsible for and those involved in these brutal acts to justice;
4. Stresses that the impunity in Chechnya leads to destabilisation across the whole North Caucasus region;
5. Takes note of the July telegram from Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to the human rights organisation Memorial pledging his commitment to investigate fully the murder of Natalia Estemirova;
6. Welcomes the initiative taken by President Medvedev to amend the NGO law with a view to easing some restrictions and registration complications for Russian NGOs, and expects substantial improvements;
7. Welcomes the decision of the Russian Supreme Court of 3 September 2009 to launch a new investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya and to treat the investigations against the three men who were acquitted in the first trial in one single case with the alleged assassin Ruslan Machmudow and those who sponsored him; calls for this trial to begin as soon as possible, to be conducted by means of a jury procedure and for the process to be open to all journalists and media;
8. Calls for a stepping-up of the EU-Russia human rights consultations and urges that this consultation process be opened to effective input from the European Parliament, the State Duma, the Russian judicial authorities and civil society and human rights organisations; calls on Russia to respect fully its obligations as a member of the OSCE and of the Council of Europe, including respect for the right of association and the right to peaceful demonstrations; stresses its position that the protection of human rights should be a privileged item on the agenda of the next EU-Russia summit and become an integral part of the new EU-Russia agreement;
9. Calls on the Russian authorities to comply with all the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and to ratify Additional Protocol 14 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms on the reform of its control system without delay;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.