

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	232
Land:	Rusland
Kilde:	Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).
Titel:	Attacks on the Press 2010: Russia
Udgivet:	15. februar 2011
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	14. november 2011



Attacks on the Press 2010: Russia

Top Developments

- Some progress in journalist murder probes, but attacks continue with impunity.
- FSB given broad detention powers in measure that targets critical media.

Key Statistic

5: Unsolved journalist murder cases that Russia's top investigators pledged to reopen.

The nation's top investigative agency reopened a series of unsolved journalist murders and reported progress on several fronts. But with convictions elusive, impunity in anti-press attacks continued to stain the nation's international image. Russia ranked eighth on CPJ's 2010 Impunity Index, reflecting one of the worst records in the world, as all but one of 19 press murders since 2000 went unsolved. While no journalists were murdered in 2010, at least one reporter was brutally beaten in retaliation for his work. And that assailant, like nearly all attackers in anti-press cases, remained at large.

ATTACKS ON THE PRESS: 2010

- [Main Index \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010.php\)](#)

Europe and Central Asia

Regional Analysis:

- [On the Runet, Old-School Repression Meets New \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-europe-central-asia-analysis.php\)](#)

Country Summaries

- [Armenia \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-armenia.php\)](#)
- [Azerbaijan \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-azerbaijan.php\)](#)
- [Belarus \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-belarus.php\)](#)
- [Kazakhstan \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-kazakhstan.php\)](#)
- [Kyrgyzstan \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-kyrgyzstan.php\)](#)
- [Russia \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-russia.php\)](#)
- [Serbia \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-serbia.php\)](#)
- [Ukraine \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-ukraine.php\)](#)
- [Uzbekistan \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-uzbekistan.php\)](#)
- [Other nations \(/2011/02/attacks-](#)

The federal Investigative Committee, responsible for probing the most serious crimes in Russia, announced it would reopen at least five unsolved cases after meeting with a CPJ delegation in Moscow in September. It was the third consecutive year that CPJ had traveled to Russia to press officials for justice. At the same time, the Kremlin announced that the Investigative Committee would have greater autonomy under a plan that has the agency reporting directly to President Dmitry Medvedev. The Investigative Committee had previously reported to the federal prosecutor general's office.

"It's a matter of honor for us to solve these murders," Investigative Committee Chairman Aleksandr Bastrykin told the CPJ delegation. "It's a matter of proving our professionalism." Bastrykin and a dozen investigators outlined their plans in a meeting with CPJ board member Kati Marton, Chairman Paul Steiger, Executive Director Joel Simon, Europe and Central Asia Program Coordinator Nina Ognianova, and CPJ Senior European Adviser Jean-Paul Marthoz.

Investigators took several positive, if incremental, steps during the year. Two suspects were awaiting trial in late year in the 2009 double murder of journalist Anastasiya Baburova and human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov on a Moscow street. In November, the Investigative Committee's Samara regional branch announced that it had identified several suspects in the murders in the early 2000s of Valery Ivanov and Aleksei Sidorov, consecutive editors of the independent newspaper *Tolyattinskoye*

on-the-press-2010-europe-central-asia-developments.php

Obozreniye in the southern industrial city of Togliatti. One suspect, the agency said, was in custody.

In their meeting with CPJ, investigators reported limited progress in two high-profile cases: the October 2006 slaying of investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya, and the July 2009 kidnapping and murder of the Grozny-based human rights journalist Natalya Estemirova.

Detectives said they were probing a widening circle of suspects in the murder of Politkovskaya, a *Novaya Gazeta* reporter who had exposed human rights abuses in Chechnya. The journalist's killers, they said, were motivated by a desire to ingratiate themselves with Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, who had often been the target of the reporter's hard-hitting stories. Bastrykin said he would seek the extradition of the suspected gunman, who was believed to be hiding in a European country that investigators would not disclose. Investigators said they found no evidence of Kadyrov's involvement in the murder.

Investigative Committee officials also told CPJ that they were trying to locate a Chechen guerrilla fighter, Alkhazur Bashayev, who they accused of murdering Estemirova. News reports suggested that Bashayev was dead, but investigators insisted to CPJ that he was alive and that he remained in Russia. Investigators said they questioned Kadyrov directly in Estemirova's murder case, but, as in the Politkovskaya case, found no evidence of his involvement. No arrests or further progress had been reported by late year.

While Estemirova's killers walked free, Kadyrov took her boss, Oleg Orlov, the head of the Memorial human rights center, to court on charges of criminal slander. After learning of the journalist's violent death, Orlov had publicly blamed Kadyrov. CPJ attended Orlov's trial at a Moscow district court in September to express solidarity, then raised the issue at a meeting with Supreme Court Chief Justice Vyacheslav Lebedev. The chief justice declined direct comment on the case, but said in general that public officials "simply have to bear" criticism. Orlov faced up to three years in prison in the case, which was pending in late year. While aggressively defending his own name, Kadyrov showed no reluctance in smearing the reputations of Memorial staff and other human rights defenders, calling them "enemies of the people, enemies of the law, enemies of the state" on Chechen television.

The Investigative Committee told CPJ that it had opened a new probe into the 2003 death of *Novaya Gazeta* Deputy Editor Yuri Shchekochikhin, who suffered a sudden, mysterious illness. His colleagues believe he was poisoned, and investigators told CPJ they were examining undisclosed new evidence. In the 2004 murder of *Forbes Russia* Editor Paul Klebnikov, the committee said it had named a new investigator. No progress was reported in the case.

The failures of the nation's politicized justice system seemed to converge in the aftermath of the 2008 killing of website publisher Magomed Yevloyev, who was shot in Ingushetia police custody. The Interior Ministry officer who killed Yevloyev in the back of an agency vehicle was convicted on the relatively minor charge of negligent homicide despite evidence that the killing was premeditated and politically inspired. Officer Ibragim Yevloyev, no relation to the victim, was the nephew of Ingushetia Interior Minister Musa Medov, who had been a target of the editor's critical journalism.

Then, in March 2010, the Ingushetia Supreme Court ordered the officer's immediate release, long before his two-year term in a low-security prison settlement had expired. The court placed only minor restrictions on the agent: observe a curfew, restrict his travel, and stay away from mass gatherings. In August, unknown gunmen shot and killed the officer at a café in Nazran, a killing that sparked suspicions that the publisher's family had engaged in the notorious regional practice of "blood vendetta." Magomed Yevloyev's father, Yakhya, denied any family involvement in the slaying. "I wanted [the officer] to suffer, to live with this pain and with the fear of punishment, since he was not punished by law," the father told *The New York Times*. The officer's killing was unsolved in late year.

A lawyer for the Yevloyev family filed an appeal to have Magomed Yevloyev's case reinvestigated. No action had been taken on the appeal by late year.

A brutal November attack on Oleg Kashin, a reporter for the independent business daily *Kommersant* and a popular blogger, drew immediate condemnation from President Medvedev and an unprecedented show of solidarity from Russian journalists. The assertive response signaled that enemies of a free press may no longer benefit from an apathetic Russian public.

Two unidentified men ambushed Kashin, 30, as he was entering his Moscow home after a late night out, news reports said. The assailants, who had been lying in wait, struck the journalist repeatedly with metal rods. The attackers did not take any of his belongings and fled the scene after a neighbor appeared on the street, *Kommersant* reported. Kashin was hospitalized with a broken skull, jaw, fingers, and leg--injuries so severe that he was in a medically induced coma for two weeks. Among other sensitive subjects, the journalist had covered a contentious highway project that would go through a forest in the Moscow suburb of Khimki. His reporting on the highway plan had drawn threats from the pro-Kremlin youth group Molodaya Gvardiya (Young Guards). In August, after Kashin reported on anti-highway protests, the group published a column on its website headlined "Journalist-Betrayers Should Be Punished" along with an image of Kashin with the caption: "He will be punished." The column was removed by the day of the attack, and Molodaya Gvardiya claimed it had no responsibility for the assault.

Although authorities had not identified a motive, the assault on Kashin recalled the savage beating two years earlier of Mikhail Beketov, the now-disabled editor of the independent newspaper *Khimkinskaya Pravda*, who had campaigned against the same highway project. In early November 2008, unknown assailants crushed Beketov's skull, broke his legs, smashed both his hands, and left him for dead in the freezing cold. Neighbors found him more than 24 hours later, according to doctors, lying in his front yard in Khimki. He underwent multiple surgeries, had a leg and several fingers amputated, and lost the ability to speak. Authorities failed to find his assailants.

But while Beketov's attackers walked free, a Khimki court convicted the editor of criminally slandering local mayor Vladimir Strelchenko, the sponsor of the contentious highway project, in a 2007 television interview. In the interview, the journalist said his car had been set on fire and that the mayor was responsible. Throughout the monthlong slander trial, Beketov was transported to the proceedings in an ambulance and wheeled into the courtroom. Court-ordered damages were nominal, 5,000 rubles (about US\$160). But as with the Estemirova case, the defamation prosecution symbolized a legal system in which the "honor" of powerful public officials seemed to count far more than the lives and safety of citizens. This time, the verdict caused an uproar at home and abroad. CPJ's Marton sent a public letter to Strelchenko on the day of the ruling, calling on him to withdraw his "cruel" complaint. The mayor did not respond, but an appellate court tossed out the verdict and Investigative Committee Chairman Bastrykin ordered a new probe into the 2008 assault on Beketov.

CPJ hosted an Impunity Summit at Columbia University in New York in April, bringing together journalists and press freedom advocates from around the world, including Russia, for discussions on how to fight impunity. CPJ highlighted Russia's impunity record in a February press briefing in Brussels and testified before U.S. Congressional committees on Russia's failure to bring the killers of journalists to justice.

The press was dealt a legal blow in July, when Medvedev signed into law a bill that expanded the powers of security agents. The law granted the Federal Security Service (FSB) broad authority to detain for up to 15 days anyone suspected of planning a crime against Russian security. The law did not specify how security agents would identify potential suspects, or what would constitute a potential crime against the nation's security. Of particular worry was an explanatory note to the new legislation, directed specifically at

the media, which stated in part: "Certain mass media outlets, including print and electronic, openly aid the formation of negative processes in the spiritual sphere, the affirmation of the cult of individualism and violence, and the mistrust in the ability of the state to defend its citizens, thus practically involving the youth in extremist activities." Aleksei Simonov, head of the Moscow-based Glasnost Defense Foundation, told CPJ that the law was bound to intimidate government critics because it "brands as extremists all those who disagree with the government, those who stand up against authorities."

One newspaper, the independent weekly *Chernovik* in the turbulent North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, was targeted with criminal allegations of "extremism." In July 2008, *Chernovik* ran an article that quoted a late guerrilla leader who had accused regional authorities of corruption and enslaving themselves to the Kremlin. Dagestani prosecutors charged *Chernovik*'s editor-in-chief, Nadira Isayeva, with making public calls to extremism and insulting law enforcement in connection with the article.

In the next 18 months, Dagestani authorities raided the homes of *Chernovik* staffers, looking for "extremist" materials. They tried to close down the paper for allegedly carrying "extremist statements" and indicted four other *Chernovik* journalists in connection with a total of 10 articles published in the weekly. *Chernovik* was one of but a handful of independent outlets covering the North Caucasus region--Russia's most dangerous assignment. The weekly was often critical of regional police and the FSB, incurring the agencies' wrath. Isayeva and her colleagues contended that the agencies had used heavy-handed anti-terrorist tactics that fueled the rise of radical groups and militant Islam.

In November, in recognition of the newspaper's courage, CPJ honored Isayeva with a 2010 International Press Freedom Award.

February 15, 2011 12:19 AM ET | [Permalink \(/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-russia.php\)](http://cpj.org/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-russia.php)