

9 November 2006

Today at a hearing of the cassation appeal by Russian Federation Prosecutor and representatives of the Klebnikov Family, the Russian Federation Supreme Court ordered a retrial of the accused murderers of journalist Paul Klebnikov. The family of Paul Klebnikov has the following comments on the ruling:

Today's RF Supreme Court decision is a hopeful sign for justice and the Rule of Law in Russia. It confirms that blatant procedural irregularities took place in the lower courts, and that these cannot be ignored.

The High Court's willingness to review and rectify the many errors of the trial shows that Russia's legal system has the ability to monitor itself. For our family, it means that despite all the delays, we may yet see justice served.

Despite this positive news, we as a family are deeply disappointed that Paul's killers and those who ordered this vicious crime are still at large two years after the fact. We take this opportunity to ask that the Government redouble its effort to identify and bring the masterminds of this crime to justice. A crime like this should not remain unsolved for so long.

We also ask that this next and all subsequent trials be open to the public. Only in this way can the numerous failures that characterized the first trial be avoided.

Russia's criminal code is only five years old and as we have seen in the sad experience of the first trial, it is too easily subverted. Significant improvements are needed for the jury system and clearly the Russian government needs to become involved at the highest levels to oversee improvements in the legal system. Only a firm commitment to the Rule of Law can prevent the underpinnings of civil society from crumbling. We are willing to help as best we can.

We hope this Supreme Court decision will increase the chances of successful arrest, prosecution and trial of the murderers of Anna Politkovskaya and the other 11 journalists who have died violently in Russia since 1998. Journalists have a professional obligation to inform the public and they must be better protected and respected by all. Contract murders must not go unpunished, or murder will become an acceptable way to control the truth.

We commend the Prosecutor's Office for its commitment to bring Paul's killers and those who ordered this vicious crime to justice. We support their efforts. While our family will suspend for the time being our own direct participation in the case, due to the enormous emotional toll on us, we reserve the right to become involved again at any time as the trial unfolds. More than ever, we want to see Paul's killers brought to justice and we will continue to speak out for independent journalism and civil society in Russia. Paul's life was taken away in Russia, and we will not waiver in our desire to remember his spirit and, in honor of his life, bring hope to all of Russia.

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