

Russia - human rights

Greens condemn cowardly murder of Natalya Estemirova

Greens/EFA MEPs were today shocked by the news of the brutal murder of Russian human rights activist Natalya Estemirova, who had close relations with the parliamentary group. Greens/EFA Co-Presidents Rebecca Harms and **Daniel Cohn-Bendit** commented:

"We deplore the cowardly murder of the exceptional and dedicated human rights activist Natalya Estemirova. In her work for Memorial, an outstanding Russian NGO, she shared our aspirations to uphold human rights in Chechnya and the wider North Caucasus region.

Along with her friend Anna Politkovskaya, she was one of the courageous few to continue to investigate and alert the public to corruption, human rights violations and organised crime in Chechnya. On several occasions Natalya Estemirova came to the European Parliament to inform MEPs on the dire human rights situation. In 2004, she was the Greens' nominee for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for freedom of thought.

The Greens call for a full and independent investigation into her abduction and murder. The Russian judiciary system must put an end to its dismal track record on such cases and for once act urgently and with due diligence. For its part, the EU must join our calls for an independent investigation and end its complicity with the Russian proclaimed "normalisation" in Chechnya.

Natalya Estemirova's death is a further reminder that the EU must make human rights the number one topic when negotiating a new partnership agreement with Russia. The Greens renew calls to set up a European Parliament human rights 'focal point' to support the human rights activists, journalist and lawyers who work under constant physical threat in Chechnya and elsewhere in the region."

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