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## ASSASSINATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST LAWYER STANISLAV MARKELOV

The UIA expresses its deep shock at the announcement of the assassination on January 19, 2009 of Russian lawyer **Stanislav Markelov** in Moscow.

Stanislav Markelov was shot in the back of the neck and died of his wound. **Anastasia Babourova**, a freelance journalist with the independent newspaper, *Novaïa Gazeta*, who was with Markelov at the time, was also shot and later died of her injuries at the hospital.

A human rights activist and member of the Rule Of Law Institute, Stanislav Markelov defended journalists such as Anna Politovskaia, among others, as well as the families of victims of the recent hostage crisis at a Moscow theatre.

He became well-known early in his career when he represented the family of a young Chechen woman, Elza Koungaïeva, who was strangled to death at the age of 18 by a Russian army colonel, Iouri Boudanov, after being kidnapped, beaten and raped by him. Colonel Boudanov was sentenced to ten years in prison in 2003.

Stanislav Markelov was killed while returning from a press conference at which he had condemned the early release of Iouri Boudanov as having taken place illegally.

A few days earlier, Oumar Israilov, who had filed a petition with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) accusing the Chechen President, R. Kadyrov, of kidnapping and torture, had been assassinated in Vienna.

As has been noted by the International Human Rights Federation (FIDH), these murders “illustrate the systematic development of violent attacks against all those who challenge the increasing immunity prevailing in the Russian Federation. Human rights defenders, witnesses, lawyers and journalists who intervene in politically sensitive court cases are in deadly danger”<sup>1</sup>.

The UIA wishes to express its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Markelov and of Anastasia Babourova.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article6255>

It also would like to remind the Russian authorities of their duty to ensure that lawyers, human rights defenders and journalists are able to work in a safe and secure environment. This duty arises from numerous binding international texts, including conventions to which Russia is a party as well as customary international law.

The UIA further appeals to the Russian authorities to take all necessary measures in order to ensure that these assassinations are impartially and thoroughly investigated and that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Paris, January 20, 2009