

ПРАВООЗАЩИТНЫЙ ЦЕНТР «МЕМОРИАЛ»

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## On the Killing of Natalia Estemirova



Our friend and colleague was killed today.

For almost ten years Natalia was the leading activist of HRC Memorial in the North Caucasus, in Chechnya. She did not only collect information about violations of human rights. She was a true human rights activist standing for common people. Natalia tried to help the victims of bombings, sweep-up operations, tortures. She demanded that authorities did impossible things – stop illegal actions. And she managed to succeed believing in her right cause and rule of law. Her work made Natalia famous throughout Chechnya. People came to her for help hoping that the crimes would at least be given publicity.

Natalia was threatened many times by officials of various levels. She never ceased working feeling that she was needed in Chechnya.

Oleg Orlov, head of HRC Memorial Board,

*“I know for sure who is responsible for the killing of Natalia Estemirova. We all know that man. It is Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechen Republic. Ramzan threatened Natalia,*

*insulted her, believed her to be his personal enemy. We don't know whether it was Ramzan himself who ordered to kill Natalia or his close associates did it to please the ruling authority. And President Medvedev seems satisfied to have a murderer as a head of one of Russia's republics.”*

When Natasha made a statement about young women of Chechnya being almost forced to wear head scarves in public she was invited to an almost private talk with Ramzan Kadyrov. Natalia later shared that Kadyrov threatened her and quoted him, ***“My hands are indeed covered in blood. And I'm not ashamed of it. I was killing and will be killing bad people. We fight against enemies of our republic.”***

We know that latest news releases about new abductions, extrajudicial executions, public shooting of people in the middle of a Chechen village prepared by Natalia caused serious indignation of high rank authorities of Chechnya.

We took the risk that was not worth it. We are guilty of it.

Saying it straightforward. Russia is suffering from state terror. We know about killings in Chechnya and in other regions. Those who try to tell the truth and express critique of the authorities are being killed. Ramzan Kadyrov made it impossible for human rights activists to work in Chechnya. Those who killed Natalia Estemirova wanted to block the flow of reliable information from Chechnya.

They seem to have succeeded in it.