

**Murder of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya**

**European Parliament resolution on EU-Russia relations following the murder of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the objectives of consolidating democracy and political freedoms in the Russian Federation, as laid down in the EU-Russia Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) which entered into force on 1 December 1997, with negotiations on a new agreement due to start before the end of 2006,
  - having regard to its previous resolutions and declarations concerning freedom of the press and freedom of speech in Russia, and in particular its resolution on EU-Russia relations of 26 May 2005<sup>1</sup>,
  - recalling the obligations of the Russian Federation with respect to human rights, in particular in light of the fact that Russia currently chairs the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,
  - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was killed in the elevator of her apartment block on Saturday, 7 October 2006, being shot in a manner consistent with a contract killing,
- B. whereas Anna Politkovskaya published many articles and several books on the human rights situation in Russia, and in Chechnya and the Northern Caucasus in particular,
- C. whereas Anna Politkovskaya was also a dedicated defender of human rights in Russia and gave effective support to the victims of human rights violations, particularly in Chechnya,
- D. whereas this murder follows that of Andrei Kozlov, the deputy chairman of the Russian Central Bank, who was trying to reform Russia's banking system; whereas, also, the commercial director of the Itar-Tass press agency, Anatoly Voronin, was killed in his apartment on 16 October 2006,
- E. whereas the murdering of political opponents has become a worrying phenomenon in the Russian political arena,
- F. whereas Russia, according to Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists, is near the top of the list of countries in which journalists have been murdered,
- G. whereas investigations into these murders have been insufficient and in most cases the killers have never been revealed,

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<sup>1</sup> OJ C 117 E, 18.5.2006, p. 235.

- H. whereas serious public concern has been expressed both in the international arena and in Russia itself about the growing restrictions on press freedom and freedom of speech,
- I. whereas freedom of the media, effective protection of independent journalists and full support for the work of human rights organisations are an essential element in the democratic development of a country,
1. Pays tribute to the work and merits of Anna Politkovskaya, a highly respected investigative reporter known as the symbol of honest journalism in Russia, who was awarded many prizes, among others the Olof Palme Prize, who courageously stood up in defence of human life and dignity and who exposed and objectively reported on various forms of crimes against humanity, especially in Chechnya;
  2. Expresses its sincere condolences to the family of Anna Politkovskaya and to her friends and colleagues in journalism and the human rights movement;
  3. Condemns in the strongest terms the murder of Anna Politkovskaya and calls on the Russian authorities to conduct an independent and efficient investigation to find and punish those responsible for this cowardly crime; calls on the EU and the Council of Europe to monitor these investigations closely;
  4. Voices its deep concern over the increasing intimidation, harassment and murder of independent journalists and of other persons critical of the current government, and reminds the Russian Government that a continuation of this tendency will negatively affect Russia's overall reputation;
  5. Calls on the Russian authorities to fight actively against intimidation of independent journalists and human rights activists and to give full protection to independent journalists who expose serious cases of injustice in their country and to human rights organisations and their representatives who defend the victims of human rights violations;
  6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take a principled and steadfast stand in the negotiations on a new PCA with the Russian Federation, insisting on the safeguarding of freedom of the press and respect for independent journalism in accordance with European standards;
  7. Urges the Council, in this context, to give serious thought to the future of relations with the Russian Federation, debating the subject with the European Parliament and civil society with a view to placing democracy, human rights and freedom of expression at the core of any future agreement and instituting a clear mechanism to monitor the implementation of all the clauses of such an agreement;
  8. Calls for the EU-Russia Human Rights Dialogue to be stepped up so as to make it more effective and result-oriented, while fully involving the European Parliament at all levels, with a view to strengthening this element in the new PCA due to be negotiated soon;
  9. Considers that all democratic institutions, including the European Parliament, should fulfil their moral obligation to condemn such crimes without delay, showing their determination to defend human rights, regardless of political circumstances;

10. Expresses its deep concern at the fact that, under the new legislation on civil society organisations, more than 90 non-governmental organisations have been forced to cease their operations in Russia; urges the Russian authorities to speed up the registration procedures, in the meantime allowing those organisations to pursue their activities until their application is correctly dealt with and entered in the register; calls on the Russian Government not to use the vagueness of the rules of the new law as a pretext to silence the critical voices of civil society;
11. Is aware that the only way to truly honour Anna Politkovskaya's passionate commitment to truth, justice and human dignity is to make common efforts to realise Anna Politkovskaya's dream of a democratic Russia which fully respects the rights and liberties of its citizens;
12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe.