



CHECHNYA

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Russia must cooperate with the Austrian Courts - Ramzan Kadyrov should testify about his involvement in the Israilov case

“The Russian government needs to cooperate with Austrian judicial authorities,” says Marek Svoboda of People in Need, on behalf of a coalition of human rights groups monitoring the Israilov-trial in Vienna [1]. “Specifically, the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov should testify in the on-going Israilov case, as there is compelling evidence suggesting that Chechen authorities were involved in the crime.”

Yesterday, the presiding judge in the Viennese Penal Court, Friedrich Forsthuber, concluded the first part of the Israilov trial, and officially decided to call President Kadyrov to testify about his involvement in the murder of Umar Israilov. This request will be made via the Russian Prosecutor General. The jury trial has been prolonged, and a verdict is expected at the end of January. Israilov was shot and killed outside his home in Vienna on 13 January 2009. Israilov was a refugee from the Russian republic of Chechnya, who had lodged a legal complaint where he implicated President Kadyrov personally in crimes like murder, torture and abduction. Three men of Chechen origin are currently on trial for forming a criminal conspiracy, for attempted abduction and for murder.

President Kadyrov's name has been mentioned by a number of witnesses in the trial. Expert witnesses have testified how under his presidency Chechnya has remained a human rights disaster zone, marked by a complete disregard for the rule of law, and a personalization of power that “appears disgraceful in a democracy,” according to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Expert witnesses further noted a pattern in how a number of rivals, opponents and critics of President Kadyrov have been assassinated. One of the main suspects in the case, who is thought to have fired the lethal shots, fled to Chechnya and allegedly received an important commission in the Chechen law enforcement. The mobile phone of the chief suspect contained pictures of the suspect and President Kadyrov embracing. One of Kadyrov's closest advisers was described as the chief organizer of the crime by the prosecutor: the accused met him several times prior to the assassination, called him right afterwards, and a copy of his passport was found in the car of the assassins.

“This is a landmark trial,” says Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). “It sheds light on the system of crime and impunity operated by President Kadyrov. If Russia decides to cooperate with the Austrian judicial authorities, it would open a door to a process of accountability. If Ramzan Kadyrov refuses the court summons, Russia will once again demonstrate that it has no interest in accountability.”

See the [special “dossier” on the FIDH website](#) for more information on the Israilov case, the coalition of human rights groups, including summaries of the hearings.

The coalition will organize a press conference on 2 December in Vienna, one day prior to the witness statement of Ali Israilov, the father of the deceased, who today remains the only person who has lodged a legal complaint against President Kadyrov. Mister Israilov will be present.

[1] Members of this coalition are: the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), together with Human Rights Center "Memorial" (Russia), People in Need (Czech Republic), Norwegian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Austrian Helsinki Association for Human Rights and Novaya Gazeta (Russia), Civil Rights Defenders (Sweden)

<http://www.fidh.org/Russia-must-cooperate-with-the-Austrian-Courts>