

## **Alleged attempt to the life of Russian human rights defender Ms. Karinna Moskalenko**

**Geneva-Paris, October 14, 2008. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of their joint programme, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, express their deep concern about the alleged attempt to poison Ms. Karinna Moskalenko, a Russian human rights defender.**

On October 13, 2008, mercury was discovered in the car of Ms. **Karinna Moskalenko**, a lawyer and Head of the International Protection Centre, who resides in Strasbourg, France. Her physical health and that of her family are satisfactory, though she does not feel well. Yet, she cannot tell for how long the car could have been contaminated with mercury. The Prosecutor of Strasbourg, where Ms. Moskalenko lives, opened an investigation into the alleged attempt to poison her.

On October 15, 2008, Ms. Moskalenko was to participate in the preliminary hearings at the military court in Moscow on the case of Ms. Anna Politkovskaya, in which she was to represent the family of the murdered journalist. In the past, Ms. Moskalenko has also represented torture victims in Chechnya, relatives of those killed in the 2004 Beslan school siege, and survivors of the hostage crisis at Moscow's Nord-Ost theatre in 2002. She is also the lawyer of Mr. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former CEO of Yukos, who is still detained in Siberia. Lawyers of Ms. Moskalenko's International Protection Centre also represent the interests of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society (RCFS) in Strasbourg in one of the complaints submitted to the European Court on Human Rights on the ban of the organisation.

The Observatory therefore fears that this alleged murder attempt against Ms. Moskalenko might be linked to her human rights activities, and calls upon the French authorities to provide adequate measures of protection for Ms. Moskalenko, in conformity with the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, as well as to conduct a fair and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned alleged murder attempt against Ms. Moskalenko in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions provided by the law.

Furthermore, the Observatory calls upon the Russian authorities to put an end to any acts of harassment against all Russian human rights defenders and to conform with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, as well as of the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for enhanced protection of human rights defenders, adopted on February 6, 2008, and of the Resolution on Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Human Rights Defenders and National Human Rights Institutions, adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on July 10, 2007.

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L'OMCT a son siège à Genève, en Suisse. Elle coordonne le réseau SOS-Torture composé de 282 organisations régionales et internationales dans 93 pays sur cinq continents.

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