



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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Russian Federation: ICJ calls for thorough, independent investigation into killing of judge

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today deplored the killing in Ingushetia of Judge Aza Gazgireeva, Deputy Chief Justice of the regional Supreme Court, who was shot dead on Wednesday outside her children's kindergarten in Nazran. The attack on this senior member of the judiciary comes just over one year after Judge Gazgireeva's predecessor, Judge Hasan Yandiev, was shot dead: the investigation into that killing has still not concluded. Both judges had been involved in anti-corruption cases, as well as cases involving armed groups.

The ICJ called for prompt, thorough and independent investigations into the killing, to bring to justice those responsible for the attack.

"Criminal attacks on members of the judiciary undermine judicial independence and impair judges in carrying out their vital professional functions, impartially and without fear. As such they represent a serious threat to the rule of law." said Róisín Pillay, Senior Legal Advisor for Europe at the ICJ. "No assumptions should be made about responsibility for the killing. The response of the authorities must now be to apply the full rigour of the criminal justice process to ensure effective investigation and trial of both the perpetrators and the instigators of this crime. This process must be seen to be fair and effective, in accordance with international human rights standards" she added.

The ICJ also stressed that international human rights law, including the European Convention on Human Rights, requires the authorities to take measures to protect judges and lawyers who may be at risk of criminal violence. Under the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, states have duty to ensure that lawyers can perform their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference (principle 16) and must provide adequate protection to lawyers whose security is threatened (principle 17). In this context the ICJ is particularly concerned at reports that guns issued to judges in Ingushetia were recently withdrawn.

"Following the killing of judge Gazgireeva, the Ingush authorities should provide effective protection for all judges who may be under threat, from whatever quarter, and take measures to prevent and counter attempts to pressure or interfere with judges' professional functions" said Róisín Pillay.

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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