

Dubai Cuts Sentences In Yamadayev Slaying

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Yamadayev

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Dubai court on Wednesday slashed the prison terms for two men convicted in the 2009 slaying of former Chechen commander Sulim Yamadayev from life to just three years in a surprise ruling that highlighted the international intrigue surrounding the case.

The Dubai Appeals Court judge gave no immediate reason for the decision, but Yamadayev's family had submitted a letter disavowing any desire for further punishments in connection with the killing.

Four other suspects remain at large, including State Duma Deputy Adam Delimkhanov, and it is unclear whether the family's letter also could sway Dubai police to drop their demands for the suspects' arrest. Delimkhanov, a relative of Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov, has denied any link to the slaying.

The justice system in the United Arab Emirates mixes Western codes with Islamic tenets,

including giving weight to family appeals such as accepting "blood money" in exchange for leniency in murder cases.

The decision by the appeals court judge, Mustafa al-Shennawi, could allow the two inmates — from Iran and Tajikistan — to go free in early 2012, counting time already served in prison.

They were convicted in April of helping plan the March 2009 slaying of Yamadayev, who was living in Dubai under an alias. Prosecutors now have until late January to challenge the appeals court ruling.

The daylight shooting in a parking lot stunned Dubai authorities, who had often provided temporary haven to embattled political figures such as the late Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan and former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

Dubai's reputation as a latter-day Casablanca was further reinforced by the spy thriller-like murder of Hamas commander Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in January by a hit squad suspected of using disguises and fake passports. Dubai police claim the slaying was masterminded by Israel's Mossad secret service.

Yamadayev was a former Chechen warlord who switched sides in the conflict between Chechen rebels and the federal government. He later fell out of favor with Kadyrov and fled, making his way to Dubai.

The two jailed men — Mehdi Taqi Dahuria of Iran and Tajik national Makhsood Jan Asmatov — were convicted of aiding in the murder plot, including passing the gun to the alleged shooter and helping other suspects flee the UAE. Dahuria worked in Dubai as a trainer of Kadyrov's racehorses.

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