

New Case Into Politkovskaya Killing Goes to Court

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A case against five men suspected of being involved in the 2006 high-profile murder of Russian investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya has been sent to court, prosecutors said Tuesday.

Politkovskaya, who was a journalist with the opposition-leaning Novaya Gazeta newspaper, was shot dead in the elevator of her apartment building on October 7, 2006.

Investigators suspect she was killed over her articles, many of which criticized the Kremlin's policy in the North Caucasus and the leadership in Chechnya.

Lom-Ali Gaitukayev, from the Chechen republic, stands accused of organizing the murder on the request of an unknown mastermind for \$150,000.

The prosecutors allege that he hired three of his relatives — Rustam, Ibragim

and Dzhabrail Makhmudov — and former police official Sergei Khadzhikurbanov to carry out the killing.

Rustam Makhmudov is accused of being the man who actually fired the gun.

Deputy editor-in-chief at Novaya Gazeta, Sergei Sokolov, expressed hope that the trial will make some headway in the long-running investigation.

"As for the extent of their [the defendants'] involvement, let us wait for the court. I have no doubt that they are connected to the killing, and the court must determine the role they each played," Sokolov, who also oversees the paper's independent inquiry in the murder, told RIA Novosti.

One former police official has been already charged and convicted over the killing in a separate trial in December. He reached a plea bargain with the investigation and testified against the other suspects in the case.

Two of the Makhmudov brothers, Ibragim and Dzhabrail, and Khadzhikurbanov were tried and acquitted in a jury trial in 2009 on the same charges.

The Supreme Court overturned the ruling, and a new investigation into the case was launched.

This new case will also be considered by a jury.

Human rights groups and Western governments often cite the killing of Politkovskaya as an extreme example of the pressure under which journalists work in the country, and as an indication of the limits on freedom of speech in Russia.

Politkovskaya's colleagues and relatives have repeatedly urged investigators to identify the mastermind behind the crime, who remains at large.

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