

Judge Grants Jury Trial in Politkovskaya Murder Case

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Five men accused of killing journalist Anna Politkovskaya were granted the right on Tuesday to be tried by a jury for one of Russia's most notorious unsolved murders.

Politkovskaya, whose reporting was scathingly critical of the Kremlin, was gunned down in 2006 in a case that caused an international outcry and came to symbolize the stifling of dissent under President Vladimir Putin.

The defendants, three of whom are facing trial for the second time, successfully petitioned a Moscow court to be allowed to face a jury, rather than a single judge who they argued could be biased against them.

"The prosecutors hold this case as a matter of honor — they simply want to get a conviction," said Murad Musayev, a defense lawyer. "In this case, our only hope is the independence and impartiality of the jurors."

At the first trial in 2009, the jury embarrassed prosecutors by acquitting two Chechen brothers and a former policeman. The Supreme Court later threw out the verdicts at prosecutors' request and sent the case back to them.

Anna Stavitskaya, a lawyer representing Politkovskaya's son Ilya and daughter Vera, welcomed Tuesday's ruling.

"From our point of view, a jury trial is the best option since it fully respects the adversarial principle between the sides," she said. The court will start selecting 12 main jurors and a number of reserves on June 20.

Family, friends and former colleagues of Politkovskaya say justice will not be truly served until the person who ordered the killing is found, but they have little hope the second trial will find that out. Her case is among at least a dozen murders of Russian journalists that remain unsolved.

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