

Politkovskaya's Children Declare Murder Trial Illegitimate

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The children of murdered investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya have declared the impending trial about her murder illegitimate and are refusing to participate, news reports said.

"We refuse to come to court, refuse to give any kind of testimony, and also refuse to acknowledge as legitimate any of Judge Melekhin's actions in the consideration of this criminal case," Ilya and Vera Politkovskaya said in a statement.

The Politkovskaya children censured the court for excluding them and their representatives from jury selection and for refusing to reschedule tomorrow's court hearing.

"We have waited almost seven years for the murderers to end up in the docket, and the government didn't bother to wait a few days," they said.

Novaya Gazeta reporter Anna Politkovskaya was shot to death in the elevator of her Moscow apartment building in October, 2006, sending shock waves through the international human rights community. The murder has widely been seen as a response to her criticism of Chechen leadership and Russian government policy in the North Caucasus.

Standing trial for her murder are Lom-Ali Gaitukayev, his three nephews Rustam, Ibragim and Dzhabrail Makhmudov as well as ex-police officer Sergei Khadzhikurbanov.

Gaitukayev is accused of arranging the murder for a fee of \$150,000. His nephew Rustam Makhmudov is said to have pulled the trigger.

An earlier jury ruling acquitted Ibragim Makhmudov, Dzhabrail Makhmudov, and Khadzhikurbanov of any involvement, but the decision was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2009.

A sixth defendant, ex-cop Dmitry Pavlyuchenkov, was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment in December after agreeing to testify against his co-conspirators. Anna Stavitskaya, the Politkovskayas' lawyer, criticized the deal, claiming that it would obstruct investigations into who actually ordered the murder.

As part of his plea bargain, Pavlyuchenkov named deceased oligarch Boris Berezovsky and Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev as masterminds behind the killing. Stavitskaya dismissed these accusations as scapegoating.

The defendants' application for a trial by jury was granted early in June, but it took the court three tries to select a jury. Earlier selections were rescheduled due to illness, the unavailability of jury members, and suspected jury bias.

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