

# Politkovskaya Suspect Shot in Central Moscow

By [Ivan Nechepurenko](#)

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Dzhabrail Makhmudov at an earlier hearing. **Maxim Stulov / Vedomosti**

A defendant in the ongoing trial over the murder of prominent investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya was shot and wounded near Ulitsa 1905 Goda metro on Wednesday evening, his lawyer said.

Dzhabrail Makhmudov, who along with his two Chechen brothers Rustam and Ibragim is accused of being involved in the 2006 shooting of Politkovskaya, was shot in his left thigh. The bullet passed through his leg just millimeters away from his femoral artery.

The suspect's lawyer, Murad Musayev, said that doctors told him Makhmudov was "extremely lucky" and that if the bullet had hit the artery he would have been killed.

Though it is unclear whether the attack was linked to Makhmudov's involvement in the trial, Musayev said that would be the most obvious explanation, since the case has been a central

part of Makhmudov's life for the last four years.

Makhmudov is accused of waiting for Politkovskaya near her Moscow apartment building with his two brothers on Oct. 7, 2006 and then standing by while his brother Rustam shot her to death in the elevator.

All the defendants in the trial have pleaded not guilty and were acquitted of the charges by a jury in 2009, but the Supreme Court later ordered a retrial.

Up until now, Politkovskaya's children, Ilya and Vera, refused to participate in the second trial, calling it "illegitimate" since they were not allowed to oversee the process of selecting jury members.

But on Thursday they revoked their earlier decision and appeared in court. Their lawyer, Anna Stavitskaya, said they had changed their minds because the suspects' defense lawyer was using their absence against them.

"Despite the procedural flaws, Ilya and Vera still wanted to defend their interests," Stavitskaya said. "In addition, they were moved by an open letter written to them by social activists."

On Monday, several well-known public figures — including Alexander Cherkasov, a member of the Memorial civil rights group's board, and head of Glasnost Fund Alexei Simonov — wrote a letter calling on Politkovskaya's children to take part in the hearings so that they would be fair.

In light of Wednesday's shooting, the public prosecutor on Thursday asked the court to separate Dzhabrail Makhmudov's trial from that of the other four defendants due to his inability to be present before the court.

Musayev expressed suspicion about the move, however.

"I am afraid to speculate [about the reason behind the shooting], but immediately after it happened our opponents filed a plea with the court to separate my client's case," he said by phone.

"What they want to do is get rid of me as the defendant and of Dzhabrail Makhmudov as witness."

A Grozny-born lawyer, Musayev, 29, earned publicity when he won an acquittal for the three Makhmudov brothers in 2009.

Novaya Gazeta reporter Anna Politkovskaya was shot in the head in the elevator of her Moscow apartment building in October 2006. The killing sent shock waves through the international human rights community, as it was widely seen as a response to her criticism of Russia's policy in the North Caucasus.

Along with the Chechen-born brothers, ex-police officers Sergei Khadzhikurbanov and Dmitry Pavluchenkov were also accused of involvement in the murder.

Pavluchenkov was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment after agreeing to testify against his co-conspirators. He named Boris Berezovsky, the deceased oligarch and outspoken President Vladimir Putin critic, and Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev as masterminds behind the murder.

Stavitskaya dismissed those accusations as scapegoating, while Musayev said it was Pavluchenkov's subordinates in the police force that executed the killing.

Contact the author at [i.nechepurenko@imedia.ru](mailto:i.nechepurenko@imedia.ru)

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