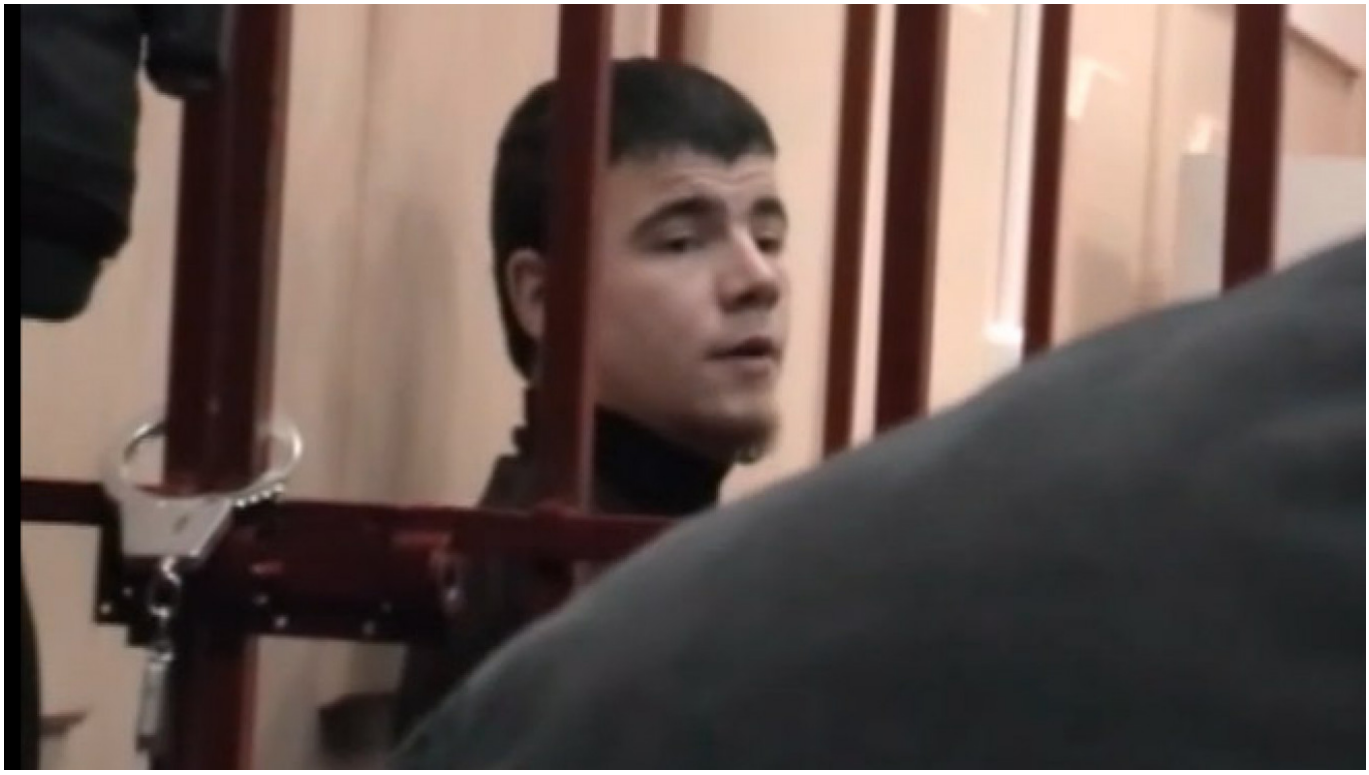
The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Nationalist Confesses to Multiple Killings

By The Moscow Times

September 18, 2014



Nikita Tikhonov

A militant nationalist currently serving out a life sentence for the high-profile 2009 killings of a journalist and a prominent lawyer confessed to numerous other killings in court on Thursday.

Nikita Tikhonov, sentenced to life in prison in 2011 for the murder of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anastasia Baburova and human rights lawyer Stanislav Markelov, is currently standing trial on charges of illegal weapons possession, murder, racketeering and the creation of an extremist organization.

The extremist group in question, BORN, a Russian acronym that stands for "militant organization of Russian nationalists," was involved in numerous murders and attempted murders, targeting ideological opponents and ethnic minorities, prosecutors said on Thursday.

Tikhonov, one of the group's founders, confessed to seven murders, two attempted murders and weapons possession at Thursday's hearing, Lenta.ru reported. Tikhonov had reportedly made a deal with prosecutors in early September to provide testimony in exchange for expedited court proceedings.

"The defendant confessed, having described the role of his accomplices in the crimes, preparations for them. As a result, on the basis of this testimony, criminal cases have been opened against other members of the gang," a prosecutor was cited as saying by Lenta.ru.

Yevgenia Khasis, Tikhonov's common-law wife, who was earlier sentenced to 18 years in prison for her involvement in the killings of Markelov and Baburova, testified as a witness at Thursday's trial, according to online news portal MediaZona.

Apart from Markelov and Baburova, prosecutors say BORN's victims include several members of an anti-fascist movement that sought to counter nationalism, an employee of the Interior Ministry and a Muay Thai boxing champion, Muslim Abdullayev, Lenta.ru reported.

Prosecutors have asked the court to give Tikhonov 20 years for the crimes. The verdict will be handed down on Sept. 22.

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