The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Case Dropped Against Ex-Official Suspected of Ordering Journalist's Murder

May 13, 2015



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The case against a former regional official suspected of ordering the murder of a Russian investigative journalist in 2000 was closed Wednesday after the crime's 15-year statute of limitations expired, the TASS news agency reported.

Igor Domnikov, a reporter with opposition-minded newspaper Novaya Gazeta, died from injuries sustained in an attack at the entrance of his Moscow apartment in May 2000. The former deputy regional governor of the Lipetsk region, Sergei Dorovsky, was charged in March for having ordered the attack.

Investigators alleged that Dorovsky convinced a friend, Pavel Sopot, to organize an attack on the journalist, who mostly covered social issues for Novaya Gazeta. The motive behind the crime, the Investigative Committee said, had been a series of articles penned by Domnikov

that had been critical of Dorovsky.

The former official continues to deny his involvement in the murder.

Novaya Gazeta is well-known for publishing articles that are often critical of Russian politics and government authorities. A number of its prominent journalists have been murdered in connection with their professional activities. These include Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot dead in her apartment building's elevator in 2006. She had received numerous death threats for her coverage of human rights violations allegedly committed by Russian troops in Chechnya during the two wars that ravaged the restive republic.

In 2009, political activist Natalya Estemirova, who also wrote for Novaya Gazeta, was found dead after having been abducted in Chechnya, where she too had been reporting on alleged rights abuses.

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