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# Putin Pardons Slain Journalist's Killer for Fighting in Ukraine – RBC

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Sergei Khadzhikurbanov. **ITAR-TASS**

President Vladimir Putin has pardoned one of the convicted killers of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya after he fought for the Russian army in Ukraine, the RBC news website reported Tuesday.

Sergei Khadzhikurbanov, a former police officer, was handed a 20-year prison sentence nearly a decade ago for his involvement in the 2006 killing of Politkovskaya, an investigative journalist who covered stories for the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

"Khadzhikurbanov participated in [Russia's military campaign in Ukraine] as a prisoner under his first contract," RBC quoted his lawyer Alexei Mikhalchik as saying.

"He was then pardoned and now participates in [Russia's campaign in Ukraine] as a freelance military man having signed a contract with the Defense Ministry," Mikhalchik added.

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Khadzhikurbanov's lawyer did not specify when his client signed up for the war and received the presidential pardon.

Politkovskaya's children and employer, the shuttered independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, condemned the pardon as a "monstrous injustice and arbitrariness."

"It's a desecration of the memory of someone killed for their beliefs and professional duty," they said in a statement. "The state has long ceased to protect the law and uses this law for its own perverted reasoning."

Russia's Defense Ministry and the private military outfit Wagner began recruiting prisoners to fight in Ukraine last summer amid a manpower shortage on the front line.

Investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, a fierce critic of President Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin's wars in Chechnya, was shot dead on Oct. 7, 2006, at the entrance of her apartment in central Moscow. She was 48 years old.

In 2014, a court sentenced two men to life in prison over Politkovskaya's killing and handed lengthy prison terms to three others involved, including Khadzhikurbanov.

The European Court of Human Rights has condemned Russia for failing to take adequate steps to find those who ordered Politkovskaya's murder.

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