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PRESS RELEASE

Russia: Activist from Ingushetia killed in Ambush

ARTICLE 19 is shocked at the killing of Maksharip Aushev, a well-known activist from Ingushetia. Aushev was killed on 25 October in Kabardino-Balkaria, a neighbouring republic of Ingushetia, when his car came under fire from another passing vehicle. Aushev's cousin, who was travelling with him, was badly injured in the attack.

Aushev had escaped an earlier kidnap attempt on 15 September in Ingushetia, when masked and armed men blocked the road with armoured vehicles. This attempt was prevented by passersby and the local traffic police.

Maksharip Aushev was an outspoken critic of former Ingushetian President Murat Zyaskov and had campaigned actively for his removal from office. He had become active on human rights in 2007 after his son and nephew were abducted. Aushev had organised peaceful protests and succeeded in getting them released,

In September 2008 he had taken over the opposition website www.ingushetiya.ru (later renamed www.ingushetia.org) after the murder of its owner and former editor, Magomed Yevloev, on 31 August 2008. After President Zyaskov was replaced in November 2008, Aushev officially announced he would cease his opposition activities but would remain active in human rights. He left the website that same month.

The killing of Maksharip Aushev is the latest in a series of deadly attacks on journalists, human rights defenders and civil society activists in the North Caucasus region. The most high-profile of these has been the killing of Natalya Estemirova in July this year.

“The violent death of Maksharip Aushev shows once again the great personal risks that those voicing critical opinions in the North Caucasus are exposed to,” says Dr Agnès Callamard, ARTICLE 19 Executive Director. *“The Russian government must show a genuine commitment to protecting those who exercise their right to freedom of speech. The climate of fear and intimidation in the North Caucasus is exacerbated by impunity for human rights abuses, as the state fails to bring perpetrators of such abuses to justice.”*

ARTICLE 19 calls upon the Government of the Russian Federation to:

- Immediately open a full and impartial investigation at federal level into the murder of Maksharip Aushev, and to ensure that both the perpetrators and instigators of this murder are identified and prosecuted; and

- Take meaningful steps to stop attacks on journalists, human rights defenders and civil society activists in the North Caucasus, and demonstrate a commitment to the protection of human rights, and the right to freedom of expression.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For more information please contact: Nathalie Losekoot at: nathalie@article19.org, or +44 20 7324 2500
- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.