

PEN CANADA

for FREEDOM of EXPRESSION

PEN Canada horrified by murder of leading Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya

Toronto, October 10, 2006 – PEN Canada is shocked by the news of the murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya on October 7.

The renowned journalist and author was found shot dead in an elevator in her apartment building in Moscow. The killer left a handgun by the body after carrying out what has been described as a “professional assassination”.

“All evidence points to this senseless killing as being deliberate and political in nature,” said PEN Canada Writers in Prison Committee Chair Alan Cumyn. “We urge Russian authorities to undertake a thorough and professional investigation that leads to the prosecution of those responsible.”

“Anna Politkovskaya is a courageous writer known for her criticism not only of the Chechen war but also of the totalitarian backlash characterizing the latest developments in Russia. Her death raises serious concerns and confirms all the fears,” said Jiri Grusa, President of International PEN. “We protest in the strongest terms the situation in Russia that has allowed this to occur.”

“Anna Politkovskaya’s integrity and courage inspired writers around the world as she reported on the most difficult situations in Russia,” said Joanne Leedom-Ackerman, International Secretary of International PEN. “She was an outspoken advocate for human rights in PEN forums and other forums around the globe. International PEN mourns her loss.”

A journalist who covered the war in Chechnya, Politkovskaya had been receiving threats since 1999 after she wrote articles claiming that the Russian armed forces had committed human rights abuses in Chechnya. Despite these threats she continued to write and, in 2003, published *A Dirty War: a Russian Reporter in Chechnya*. She is also a co-contributor to *A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya*, published in 2003. Her most recent book, *Putin’s War: Life in a Failing Democracy*, is to be published in paperback in December this year.

In 2004, Politkovskaya fell seriously ill as she attempted to fly to Beslan to cover the hostage-taking there, leading to speculation that she had been deliberately poisoned to stop her from reporting on the crisis.

At least twelve other journalists in Russia have been killed in work-related, contract-style murders since President Vladimir Putin took office in 2000.

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Notwithstanding declarations by judicial officials in the Russian government, no one has yet to be brought to justice in any of those cases.

About PEN Canada

PEN Canada is a centre of International PEN that campaigns on behalf of writers around the world persecuted for the expression of their thoughts. In Canada, it supports the right to free expression as enshrined in Section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

For more information, please contact David Cozac at PEN Canada, dcozac@pencanada.ca or 416 703 8448 x24. Web site: www.pencanada.ca.