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CCBE Human Rights Award 2009 granted to assassinated Russian lawyer Stanislav Markelov

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), representing over 700,000 lawyers from the European Union and European Economic Area through their member Bars and Law Societies, has granted its 2009 Human Rights Award to **Stanislav Markelov**, a Russian lawyer assassinated on 19 January 2009 in Moscow.

Stanislav Markelov, who was also a journalist and the President of the "Rule of Law Institute", dedicated his whole professional life to the promotion of human rights in Russia. Despite his young age, he had outstanding achievements to his name, not only for the parties that he defended and assisted, but more generally for the development of the rule of law in the whole Russian Federation.

Stanislav Markelov defended Anna Politkovskaya, the Russian journalist shot in Moscow in 2006 while she was investigating atrocities committed during the Chechen wars by the Russian military. He also represented Mikhail Beketov, the editor of a pro-opposition newspaper, assaulted in 2008, and several Chechen nationals tortured during the Chechen wars. He defended people who were beaten, tortured or raped by Russian special police forces, as well as victims of the Moscow Dubrovka theater hostage crisis in October 2002 caused by Chechen separatists. He was the lawyer of the family of Ms. Elza Kungaeva, a Chechen girl of 18 years old, abducted and murdered by Colonel Yuri Budanov after being kidnapped, beaten and raped by him. Convicted inter alia for the rape and murder of Ms. Kungaeva, Budanov was to obtain early release on 12 January 2009, but Stanislav Markelov lodged an appeal against this decision. The appeal was rejected and the ex colonel obtained early release on 15 January 2009. On 19 January 2009, after leaving a press conference denouncing Budanov's release, Stanislav Markelov was shot dead in the head in the middle of the street in the center of Moscow. Ms. Anastacia Baburova, a journalist at Novaya Gazeta who took part in the conference, was also shot and has subsequently died from her injuries.

In reaction to the assassination of Stanislav Markelov, the CCBE wrote to the Russian government urging it to carry out an immediate and impartial investigation into the two murders in order to identify those responsible and bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal. The CCBE also asked the government to ensure that all attempts to discredit lawyers for the legitimate exercise of their professional duties be promptly and effectively stopped.

The CCBE President, Anne Birgitte Gammeljord, gave a speech at the award ceremony where she stressed that Stanislav Markelov had paid a price which no lawyer should ever be asked to pay in defence of the rule of law and in defending clients. Those present observed a minute's silence in memory of Stanislav Markelov. The full text of the speech is available on the CCBE website (http://www.ccbe.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/NTCdocument/EN_speech_ABG_Plenar1_1259594236.pdf).

The CCBE President declared today: "*Stanislav Markelov deserves the respect of all European lawyers for having demonstrated outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding fundamental values, in a very difficult work environment. He paid for his courageous commitment with his life. Stanislav Markelov is a symbol of the fight for human rights.*"

Background

The CCBE Human Rights Award was created in 2007 in order to highlight the work of a lawyer or lawyers' organisation that bring honour to the legal profession by demonstrating outstanding commitment and sacrifice in upholding fundamental values. In 2008 the Award went jointly to a Chinese lawyer, Li Heping, and to the group of Spanish lawyers who intervened in the 11/3 Madrid bombing trial. The first Award, in 2007, went to the organisation Avocats Sans Frontières (Lawyers Without Borders).

For further information,
please contact Antoine Fobe
Tel: +32.(0)2.234.65.10
Fax: +32.(0)2.234.65.11/12
E-mail: fobe@ccbe.eu