

**Chairman of the Investigative Committee
of the Russian Federation
Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Tekhnicheskii pereulok, d.2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation**

Brussels, 21 May 2014

**Re: Concerns regarding death threats against Ms Sapiyat Magomedova and Mr Musa Suslanov,
criminal defence lawyers**

Dear Chairman,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it also has observer representatives from a further thirteen European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE previously wrote to you on 24 June 2013 to express its serious concern over the situation of Ms Sapiyat Magomedova and Mr Musa Suslanov, two criminal defence lawyers who have received serious death threats in connection with their work on a high-profile case in which they are representing the families of five men killed by firearms in the city of Kizlyar, Dagestan, in March 2012. According to trustworthy reports, it seems that the two lawyers received several threats of physical violence, arson attacks and bombing of their office building if they do not halt their work on behalf of the victims of the case.

The CCBE has been recently informed that the two lawyers continue to receive death threats in relation to their work on the same case that involves allegations against some high profile individuals. On 3 May 2014, a man related to one of these individuals arrived at the office of Ms Sapiyat Magomedova and made a thinly veiled threat, saying: "I do not want to learn that something has happened to you". In April 2014 Ms Magomedova posted an update on the Facebook group 'My Dagestan' and an anonymous person commented that she was being "restless" and that she would be helped to "find peace". At the time of the Facebook post, Ms Magomedova and her colleague were told by a reliable confidential source that a hit man had been hired to kill them.

According to the information that we received, there has been no effective, if any, investigation of their complaint by the authorities, and a year later no investigator has ever approached the lawyers to take any evidence or testimonies.

The CCBE is alarmed by these facts, which indicate a threatening environment for lawyers in Russia.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethicsconsult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Furthermore, Article 17 states that:

Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to guarantee the safety of Ms Sapiyat Magomedova and Mr Musa Suslanov and to ensure that the threats that they have received are impartially investigated and that the persons responsible are promptly identified and prosecuted. The CCBE also implores you to take all necessary measures to guarantee that lawyers in Russia are able to perform their professional duties without hindrance, intimidation and harassment or any improper interference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aldo Bulgarelli', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Aldo BULGARELLI
President