

EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS



PRESS RELEASE

Convictions in the Umar Israilov trial in Vienna: the murder of Chechen dissident was ordered in Grozny

Vienna/Berlin, 1 June 2011 Following criminal proceedings before the regional criminal court in Vienna surrounding the murder of Umar Israilov, the three accused Exile-Chechens were handed down sentences of lifelong, 19 and 16 years. After a trial lasting six months the criminal court was satisfied that the accused were directly involved in the organization and execution of the murder. Also examined, during the oral hearings, was the power structure of the Chechen leadership as well as its links to the defendants. ECCHR considers that the insights gained during the trial warrant further criminal investigations by Austrian and Russian prosecutors into the murder's main offender and organizers in Chechnya. Requests to Russia from the Viennese court to actively support the trial by facilitating witness statements went unanswered. In this way Russia failed to contribute to the solving of the murder, particularly with regard to the responsibility of suspects in Chechnya.

ECCHR had its own lawyer present at the trial, supporting the Vienna based long time lawyer of Umar Israilov and of his family, Nadja Lorenz, as well as presenting, among others, three of the leading experts on Chechnya as witnesses. These witnesses depicted the murder of Umar Israilov within the wider context of human rights violations and described the constant climate of fear and impunity in the region.

In Chechnya, Umar Israilov was repeatedly tortured and brutally abused. In the summer of 2007 he was granted refugee status in Austria. From there he commenced legal proceedings against, among others, the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov. On 13 January 2009 Umar Israilov was shot on an open street in Vienna. He had previously been repeatedly threatened and pressured to withdraw his complaint to the European Court of Human Rights and return to Chechnya. The final investigative report of March 2010 from the Austrian State Offices of Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism established a direct link between Ramzan Kadyrov and the offenders in Austria.

On the outcome of the proceedings, ECCHR Lawyer Andreas Schüller says: "*The trial has clearly shown that this is an issue of political contract killing. Further investigations must follow into those behind the crime from the former and present Chechen leadership.*"

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See also: http://www.ecchr.de/index.php/kadyrov_case.html

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