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Rights Activist Leaves Chechnya For Safety Reasons



Akhmed Gisaev left Chechnya after the murder of his colleague, Natalya Estemirova.

August 20, 2009

GROZNY -- A Chechen human rights activist and his family have left Chechnya because they fear for their lives, RFE/RL's Russian Service reports.

Aleksandr Cherkasov of the Moscow-based Memorial human rights center told RFE/RL that Akhmed Gisaev along with his late colleague, Natalya Estemirova, had been investigating the apparent

kidnapping of Chechen Apti Zainalov in the Achkhoy-Martan District of Chechnya this year.

Estemirova was assassinated last month.

Cherkasov says that after Estemirova was murdered, unknown individuals started following Gisaev.

Gisaev himself says he was tortured by federal troops several years ago and the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is scheduled to soon begin hearings on his case.

The case of Zainalov, in which Gisaev is the only witness, is also expected to be the focus of the European Court.

Cherkasov says the current circumstances forced Gisaev and his family to leave Chechnya.

Meanwhile, the senior investigator into Estemirova's murder, Igor Sobol, told RFE/RL that Gisaev's claims about his life being in danger are baseless, which is why he has declined to provide him with security officers to protect his safety.

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