

Chairman of the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation,  
General of Justice of the Russian Federation,  
A.I. Bastyrkin

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## Appeal

We are appealing to you regarding the lack of an effective investigation into the death of Madina Umyaeva, DOB 1997, mother of three small children, and regarding the coercion exerted on the investigation by executive power structures. To ensure that justice is done, we request that you transfer the case to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for preliminary investigation and keep it under your personal oversight.

On 12 June 2020 at 5:30 p.m., Madina Umayeva (hereinafter M. Umayeva) was found dead in her home at 22 Greidernaya Street, Druzhba village, Gudermes, Chechen Republic. She was buried in haste by her husband and his relatives that same night before the cause and circumstances of death could be established.<sup>1</sup>

T. Abuddazidov, the ambulance paramedic who recorded M. Umayeva's death stated that "he did not detect signs of a violent death, as he saw [only] part of the face, the neck, arm and leg."<sup>2</sup> M. Umayeva's body was not examined by a doctor.

According to Gumset Khamidova, M. Umayeva's mother in law, Madina fell down the stairs after suffering an epileptic attack.<sup>3</sup> However, M. Umayeva was not receiving treatment for epilepsy and had no such diagnosis. Madina's mother, Khutmat Dovletmirzaeva stated that her daughter was in good health, and that the prior to her death Madina had had an argument with her husband, who had previously beaten her on several occasions.<sup>4</sup>

On the day of her death, Madina Umayeva sent an SMS to her sister from a new telephone number saying that she was "leaving," and asked her sister not to give her number to her husband or mother-in-law. Shortly before she died, she sent her sister another SMS, with just one letter – "Й" (i). After this the telephone was turned off.<sup>5</sup>

Madina's cousin, M. Ayubova, told the press that Madina had complained about domestic violence:<sup>6</sup> "She told me that when her husband beat her, it was as though he

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<sup>1</sup> The video of the funeral was published in a report by CHGTRK on 18 June 2020 (03:50 minutes) // <https://grozny.tv/news.php?id=38267>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid (02:50 minutes).

<sup>3</sup> Ночные похороны в Чечне. Ответит ли кто-то за смерть Мадины Умаевой? [A nighttime funeral in Chechnya. Will someone answer for the death of Madina Umayeva?] // <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30681746.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/351029/>

<sup>5</sup> Родные умершей жительницы Гудермеса назвали ее жертвой домашнего насилия [The relatives of a deceased resident of Gudermes call her a victim of domestic violence] // <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/351029/>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

became uncontrollable, deranged, like a beast. She said that she couldn't live with him any longer. She had left him several times but always came back – older relatives intervened, the elders put pressure on her, saying that a woman should be married. And for the sake of the children she came back every time, as the children always stayed with the husband's family.”<sup>7</sup>

On 20 June 2020, M. Umayeva's body was exhumed in order to conduct a forensic examination which would establish the cause of death.<sup>8</sup> On 22 June 2020 the deceased's mother told the media that she had been present at the exhumation and seen a “scar or wound and blood from this wound” on her daughter's body.<sup>9</sup> On 22 June 2020, the local authorities invited M. Umayeva's mother's relatives, her husband's family and experts to the mayor's office of Gudermes for “a talk.” The Head of the Chechen Republic, R.A. Kadyrov, was present during this gathering.<sup>10</sup>

On 23 June 2020, the Chechen State television and radio broadcasting company (CHGTRK “Grozny”) broadcast a video of the “talk” held at the Gudermes mayor's office on 22 June. The publication “Mediazona” subsequently published excerpts of the meeting, translated from Chechen.<sup>11</sup> In an excerpt from the video published later by the 1ADAT Telegram channel,<sup>12</sup> Kadyrov is seen reprimanding M. Umayeva's sister about the family's insistence on the exhumation: “Your sister was dissected. All your sister's organs were removed and sent away to be examined. <...> On the ninth day, when a corpse starts to rot, it was dug up, sent to the morgue and taken to pieces. This is the condition that your sister's corpse was in.” Following these words, the video shows M. Umayeva's sister starting to cry.

In the video, Kadyrov also justifies domestic violence, and says that the deceased “should have held on to her marriage...when a woman is married, there are arguments, and fights, and sometimes her husband beats her.”

The Head of the Chechen Republic addresses the deceased's mother: “You asked me to help. Now prove to me that she was killed, show me at least one witness.”

The translation of the full video of this meeting published on the 1ADAT Telegram channel shows Kadyrov promising to “punish” the witnesses. “Let it be known that we will punish the guilty. If, God forbid, we find out she was killed, we'll put the murderer in jail. And we'll stop those who aren't telling the truth. These half-men, who don't keep track of their women, we will shame them before the whole village and cut them off from the village. I swear on the Koran, I won't stop until I have figured it out and punished all

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Следственные органы провели эксгумацию тела Мадины Умаевой [Investigate bodies conduct an exhumation of Madina Umayeva's body] // <https://chechnyatoday.com/news/336822>

<sup>9</sup> Мать жительницы Чечни после эксгумации тела дочери: “На ей был шрам” [Mother of Chechnya resident after the exhumation of her daughter's body: “She had a scar”] // <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/30684456.html>

<sup>10</sup> В Чечне появились предварительные результаты вскрытия тела Мадины Умаевой [Preliminary results of the autopsy of Madina Umayeva's body in Chechnya] // <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30684466.html>

<sup>11</sup> «Должна была цепляться за свой брак». Как Рамзан Кадыров разобрался в деле о гибели молодой чеченки [“She should have held on to her marriage”. How Ramzan Kadyrov dealt with the case of a young Chechen woman's death] // <https://zona.media/article/2020/06/24/umaeva>

<sup>12</sup> 1ADAT Telegram channel // <https://t.me/1ADAT/1167>

the guilty. I stand for the truth and will seek the truth. Anyone not telling the truth will be punished, it doesn't matter who he is." In addition, he refuses the mother of the deceased, as a victimized party, her right to give testimony: "It's because of you that people began to tell lies, began to spread gossip, all the sins will lie on you, after all, because you did not have the right to cite what some neighbor's neighbor said, who you don't even know. You would have had the right if you had had three witnesses, who had seen how she was being beaten and killed."<sup>13</sup>

In the end, Khutmat Dovletmirzaeva was forced to apologize to Kadyrov on camera for requesting an investigation into her daughter's death. The apology was shown on CHGTRK "Grozny".<sup>14</sup> Judging from the citations above, there are grounds to believe that this apology was made under duress.

During this same meeting, Kadyrov publicly stated that, according to the autopsy, the cause of M. Umayeva's death was non-violent. However, this conclusion by the head of the Chechen Republic's executive came ahead of the release of the results from the forensic medical report, which has yet to be completed. We are concerned that this statement may put pressure on the experts and affect the impartiality of the investigation.

According to media reports, on 26 June, Madina's mother, Khutmat Dovletmirzaeva, was again summoned by Ramzan Kadyrov.<sup>15</sup> A video recording of the meeting has not been published.

On 27 June, Khutmat Dovletmirzaeva apologized to her son-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law, and a video of the relatives' meeting was published by the state program "Chechnya today" (Chechnya Sevognya).<sup>16</sup>

Because the investigation into the circumstances of the death of M. Umayeva is being conducted by the investigative body for the Gudermes region of the Investigation Committee of Russia for the Chechen Republic, and the forensic medical examination has been entrusted to the Republican Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Grozny, the statements by the head of the Republic may put pressure on the experts and witnesses in this case, and jeopardize the impartiality and accuracy of the investigation.

The transfer of the case in order to conduct a preliminary investigation to a supervising investigatory organ will facilitate legal compliance and guarantee the safety of the victims and witnesses.

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<sup>13</sup> 1ADAT Telegram channel// <https://t.me/1ADAT/1173>

<sup>14</sup> Мать умершей в Чечне девушки извинилась перед Кадыровым за слова о домашнем насилии [Mother of a girl who died in Chechnya apologizes to Kadyrov for her words about domestic violence] // <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30686909.html>

<sup>15</sup> Мать умершей в Чечне Мадины Умаевой извинилась перед зятем за обвинения в убийстве [Mother of Madina Umayeva who died in Chechnya apologizes to son-in-law for accusations of murder] // [https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30693988.html?fbclid=IwAR1Va3Z6uSr\\_vfdUR3LZ0ETSfp-6B0Fyp1DZmJQlwi5ojCOkKewTfkazlsE](https://www.kavkazr.com/a/30693988.html?fbclid=IwAR1Va3Z6uSr_vfdUR3LZ0ETSfp-6B0Fyp1DZmJQlwi5ojCOkKewTfkazlsE)

<sup>16</sup> В Чеченской Республике прошло примирение родственников Мадины Умаевой [Reconciliation of Madina Umayeva's relatives takes place in Chechen Republic] // [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=97&v=PFvUIBx38TE&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=97&v=PFvUIBx38TE&feature=emb_logo)

Therefore, in accordance with part 6 of article 152 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation,

**WE REQUEST:**

1. To send the materials of the examination to the Main Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee of Russia, and to carry out a swift, impartial and effective investigation into the circumstances of Madina Umayeva's death.

[Signed]

- Natalia Zviagina, Director Russia Office, Amnesty International
- Jacqueline Hunt, Director Europe Office, Equality Now
- Anna Sevortian, Executive Director, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
- Hugh Williamson, Europe and Central Asia Director, Human Rights Watch
- Ilya Nuzov, Director of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Division, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Brigitte Dufour, Director, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
- Bjørn Engesland, Secretary General, Norwegian Helsinki Committee
- Stephanie Futter-Orel, Executive Manager, WAVE Network
- Anna Bentína Hermansen, President, Stigamot Counselling and Educational Center for survivors of sexual violence, Iceland
- Svetlana Gannushkina, Director, Civic Assistance Committee
- Sergey Petryakov, Director, Zona Prava
- Olga Sidorovich, Director, Institute for Law and Public Policy
- Ivan Pavlov, Head of Team 29
- Mari Davtyan, Director, Consortium of Women's non-governmental organizations
- Alena Sadikova, Director, Crisis Center KitezH
- Anna Rivina, Founder and Director, Center Nasiliu.net

- Natalia Taubina, Director, Public Verdict Foundation
- Vanessa Kogan, Director, Project Justice Initiative
- Aleksandr Cherkasov, Board Chair, Human Rights Center Memorial
- Sergey Belyaev, President, Public organization Sutyazhnik
- Marta Chumalo, Director, Women's Perspectives Center Lvov
- Nadezhda Zamotaeva, Executive Director, Center "Sisters"
- Marina Pisklakova-Parker, Board Chair, Center ANNA