

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 151

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 19, 2007

Received and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Noting the disturbing pattern of killings of numerous independent journalists in Russia since 2000, and urging Russian President Vladimir Putin to authorize cooperation with outside investigators in solving those murders.

Whereas Paul Klebnikov, the editor of the Russian version of Forbes Magazine, who was investigating suspect business dealings and corruption cases in Russia, was shot to death in Moscow on July 9, 2004;

Whereas Mr. Klebnikov's murder remains unsolved;

Whereas Anna Politkovskaya, an acclaimed Russian journalist and human rights activist who wrote numerous

articles critical of Russia's prosecution of the war in Chechnya, of human rights abuses by the Russian government and of Russian President Vladimir Putin was shot to death in Moscow on October 7, 2006;

Whereas Ms. Politkovskaya's murder remains unsolved;

Whereas Ivan Safronov, a military affairs reporter for the Russian newspaper "Kommersant" who wrote articles criticizing the failure of Russian military programs and who was planning to report on potential Russian arms sales to Middle Eastern countries, including to state sponsors of terrorism Iran and Syria, died in mysterious circumstances, falling five stories from a window in the stairwell of his apartment building in Moscow on March 2, 2007;

Whereas, Russian prosecutors subsequently suggested that Mr. Safronov may have committed suicide, although he left no suicide note and the circumstances surrounding his death raised unanswered questions;

Whereas the cause of Mr. Safronov's death remains undetermined;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, twenty-one reporters have been murdered in Russia since March 2000 and many of those murders remain unsolved;

Whereas, according to Reporters Without Borders, Russia was one of the six most dangerous countries for journalists to work in during 2006;

Whereas a number of those reporters who were murdered had reported on alleged corruption, malfeasance and other controversies at the federal, provincial and local levels of government in Russia;

Whereas a number of those murdered had reported on alleged human rights abuses by the Russian Government;

Whereas a number of those murdered had reported on the Russian government's conduct of the war in Chechnya, which has involved numerous allegations of gross human rights violations and corruption;

Whereas, if journalists are killed or silenced through undue pressure with impunity, a vibrant and participatory civil society sector cannot emerge and democratic developments are stalled; and

Whereas, according to the President of the International News Safety Institute, "murder has become the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of silencing troublesome reporting, and the more the killers get away with it the more the spiral of death is forced upwards": Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) recalls the essential role that transparency
4 and the free flow of information play in creating and
5 preserving democratic institutions and civil society in
6 any country;

7 (2) recognizes the vital contribution made by
8 independent journalists in Russia in bringing trans-
9 parency and a free flow of information to readers
10 after decades of Communist censorship and repres-
11 sion;

1 (3) notes the disturbing trend of murders of
2 independent journalists in Russia over the last dec-
3 ade;

4 (4) encourages the President of the United
5 States to formally offer Russian President Vladimir
6 Putin and other officials of the Russian Government
7 United States Government law enforcement inves-
8 tigative assistance to help identify and bring to jus-
9 tice those responsible for the many unsolved mur-
10 ders of journalists in Russia during the past decade;
11 and

12 (5) urges President Putin to seek out com-
13 petent, outside law enforcement assistance in the in-
14 vestigation of the unsolved murders of numerous
15 independent journalists in Russia.

Passed the House of Representatives June 18, 2007.

Attest: LORRAINE C. MILLER,
Clerk.