

We want justice for Natasha

We are shocked and outraged by the killing of Natasha Estemirova in Chechnya today. Natasha was a dear friend of all of us at RAW in WAR.

In 2007 we presented the first annual Anna Politkovskaya Award to Natasha for her courage in seeking and telling the truth about the torture, disappearances and murders of civilians in the war in Chechnya.

Natasha was a gentle, loving woman and a brave truth-teller, who was not afraid to speak out about the torture, rape and disappearances in Chechnya. She paid for it with her life. Like Anna did. Because there is nothing more dangerous than telling the truth in today's Russia. And Natasha was a truth-seeker with every fiber of her being. She just couldn't remain silent; she couldn't play it safe. She was a fierce spirit, a whistle-blower, a caring and loyal friend, a deeply loving woman, who stood up for humanity…

Like Anna, she was killed, because of her describing and reporting the truth about the 'dirty war' in Chechnya. She was a condemned woman – giving voice to condemned people: the people of Chechnya.

Natasha was a unique woman whose courage has earned her death threats and abuse from the authorities at home. It has also earned her the love and admiration of human rights supporters at home and around the world. She lived a life of courage and truth-telling in the face of grave danger, as Anna did.

We call on the Russian Government to bring to justice, both those who killed Natalia Estemirova and those who have ordered her murder. We call on the Russian Government to bring to justice the killers of Anna Politkovskaya, for whose murder, three years on, justice has not been done.

We also call on the world's leaders, in honouring Natasha Estemirova in the coming days, to demand justice for Natasha and to pledge to do everything in their power to protect the journalists and human rights defenders who work in areas of war and conflict, and who speak out on behalf of the victims, as Natasha and Anna did.

On 6 October 2008, on the eve of the anniversary of Anna's murder, Natasha presented the Anna Politkovskaya Award to the brave young parliamentarian from Afghanistan, Malalai Joya, with the words: 'Malalai be brave';.

We owe it to the memory of Natasha and Anna to protect the very few who still speak out, on behalf of those to whom nobody wants to listen.

RAW in WAR