



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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## Russian Federation

**Decision adopted by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 158<sup>th</sup> session (Geneva, 8 February 2019)**



Galina Starovoitova © Courtesy photo / Ms. Starovoitova's family

### RUS01 - Galina Starovoitova

#### Alleged human rights violations:

- ✓ Murder
- ✓ Impunity

#### A. Summary of the case

Ms. Galina Starovoitova, a member of the State Duma and co-Chair of the Democratic Russia Party, was assassinated in November 1998. Ms. Starovoitova was “one of the brightest politicians of the new Russia”, who “is remembered as a prominent lawyer, a human rights activist and a public figure who did much to shape modern Russian society” as stated in a joint letter of the Chairpersons of the State Duma and of the Council of the Federation dated 3 October 2017.

Following investigations and trial proceedings, Russian courts concluded that Ms. Starovoitova's murder was a contract killing aimed at halting her political activities. Many of the individuals linked to the assassination as the assailants or direct perpetrators of the crime were sentenced to prison terms of varying length. Some of them were convicted in absentia and have remained at large.

#### Case: RUS01

**Russian Federation:** Parliament affiliated to the IPU

**Victim:** Female opposition member of parliament

**Complainant:** Section I.1(a) and (d) of the **Committee Procedure** (Annex 1)

**Submission of complaint:** March 1999

**Recent IPU decision:** October 2017

**Recent IPU Mission:** - - -

**Recent Committee hearings:** Hearing with representatives of the State Duma, of the Prosecutor General's Office of St. Petersburg and with Ms. Olga Starovoitova, Ms. Galina Starovoitova's sister, and her lawyer, at the 137<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (October 2017)

#### Recent follow up

- Communication from the authorities: Letter from the Chairperson of the State Duma and the Chairperson of the Council of the Federation (October 2017);
- Communication from the complainant: (November 2018);
- Communication addressed to the authorities: Letter addressed to Chairman of the State Duma (December 2018);
- Communication addressed to the complainant: November 2018;

Until recently none of the organizers or instigators of the murder had been held accountable. According to one of the complainants, following the suspension and reopening of the investigation into the crime, a former member of parliament, Mr. Glushchenko, was investigated and subsequently convicted to 17 years in prison on 27 August 2015, as one of the accomplices/ organizers of the assassination. Mr. Glushchenko appealed the sentence, which was upheld on appeal on 17 November 2015. Mr. Glushchenko pleaded guilty and designated Mr. Vladimir Barsukov (aka Kumarin) as the mastermind of the assassination. According to the complainant, the investigation has since been examining Mr. Barsukov's role in the assassination but no progress appeared to have been achieved since then and no charges have been brought against Mr. Barsukov.

At the hearing held during the 137<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (St. Petersburg, October 2017) with representatives of the State Duma, and the Prosecutor's Office, the latter stated that Ms. Starovoitova's murder investigation was still ongoing and that it would remain open until all culprits had been held accountable. They stressed the complexity and sensitivity of contract killings, which were hard to investigate as they were based on secret arrangements making it difficult to unearth material evidence. Meanwhile, the representative of the State Duma did not confirm that the State Duma was still monitoring the case and recommended that the case be closed on the grounds that it was unlikely, in his opinion, that other suspects would be identified even if the investigation continued.

In November 2018, the complainant indicated that there had been no progress to report and expressed renewed concern that the authorities may decide to close the investigation soon.

## **B Decision**

The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

1. *Expresses concern* about the apparent lack of progress in the investigation and *sincerely hopes* that the Prosecutor's Office will give renewed priority and sufficient investigative means to help achieve a breakthrough in this long-standing case that would finally shed light on the identity of the mastermind(s) of the assassination;
2. *Deeply regrets* that no information has been forthcoming from the Russian authorities since the 137<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly (October 2017, St. Petersburg) and *urges* the State Duma and the Office of the Prosecutor General to uphold the commitment made in October 2017 to cooperate and pursue a dialogue with the IPU about the outstanding investigation to identify and hold accountable all the organizers and masterminds of the assassination of Ms. Galina Starovoitova;
3. *Reaffirms* its conviction that the State Duma's continued interest in the case—within the boundaries of the separation of powers—is critical to helping ensure that justice is done and to sending a strong signal that the assassination of a parliamentarian for having exercised her right to freedom of speech will not be left unpunished; *wishes* to know if the anti-corruption and security committee of the State Duma, or any other Standing Committee, continues to monitor the case with a view to its resolution;
4. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the Prosecutor General's Office, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
5. *Decides* to continue examining the case.