

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/russia-independent-journalist-stabbed-to-13-07-2012,43028.html>

Europe/Ex-USSR - Russia

Murder

Independent journalist stabbed to death in Siberian town

13 July 2012

Reporters Without Borders condemns journalist and activist **Alexander Khodzinsky's** murder last week in Tulun, a town in the Irkutsk region of south-central Siberia. He was found dead with stab wounds on 7 July.

"We offer our heartfelt condolences to Khodzinsky's relatives and we urge the authorities to do everything possible to bring those responsible to justice," Reporters Without Borders said. "Given his local profile and tenacious coverage of several sensitive stories, we will closely monitor how they investigate this murder and, in particular, whether they seriously examine the possibility that it was linked to his work."

Khodzinsky's body was found hidden in a hedge beside a house on Tukhachevsky Street on the morning of 7 July. Police said the 74-year-old journalist had been stabbed several times. A special unit has been set up to handle the case.

On 9 July, police arrested former deputy mayor Gennady Zhigaryov, 57, as a suspect. Zhigaryov had left public office to take charge of a local company and, according to various news sources, he and Khodzinsky knew each other and were openly at loggerheads.

Irkutsk regional ombudsman Valery Lukin has announced his intention to follow the case. He said Khodzinsky had been waging an open campaign since 2007 against abusive and illegal practices by certain local officials involved in the construction of the "Sozvedzie" (Constellation) shopping mall in the town centre.

As well as writing many articles on the subject, Khodzinsky had raised it repeatedly with the ombudsman, verbally and in writing. He also wrote to former President Dmitry Medvedev and Irkutsk governor Dmitry Mezentsev about the issue. Lukin told the media he was convinced that Khodzinsky was murdered because of his investigative reporting and his activism, not because of a personal dispute.

Photo : irk.ru
