



## CHECHNYA PEACE FORUM

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Letter published in *The Times*

### **Justice for Litvinenko and Politkovskaya** **Testing Russia's commitment to an independent judiciary**

Sir, Your leading article ("Russia on trial", [Nov 18](#)) rightly pointed out that the trial of those charged with involvement in the murder of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya is the most important test of Russia's commitment to an independent judiciary since the fall of the Soviet Union. The military court's decision to hold the trial in private means that the world will be conveniently kept in the dark over the details of the killing — such as who ordered it — of one of Russia's most prominent human rights defenders. It is a powerful message to send.

Tomorrow will mark the second anniversary of the death of Alexander Litvinenko. Alexander, like Anna, was a good friend of mine and a fierce critic of the continuing human rights atrocities and war crimes in Chechnya that became a hallmark of Vladimir Putin's presidency. Their murders are indicative of the gangster politics of fear and repression utilised by the Putin-Medvedev regime to suppress any meaningful opposition.

It is crucial that those of us who cannot remain silent in the face of such endemic abuses must continue with our endeavours and not be cowed by bully-boy tactics to ensure that Alexander and Anna's killers are brought to justice.

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