



## CHECHNYA PEACE FORUM

PRESS RELEASE

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### **Britain must stand up to Putin and his gangster politics**

Following the Foreign Secretary, David Miliband's decision to expel four Russian diplomats in protest at Moscow's refusal to extradite Scotland Yard's prime suspect in the murder of Alexander Litvinenko, Ivar Amundsen, Director of the Chechnya Peace Forum, said:

"I am very pleased at the new Foreign Secretary's decision to stand up to Russia over their refusal to extradite the man charged with the murder of a British citizen on the streets of London. This is the first diplomatic test faced by Gordon Brown's new Government and I urge him to do everything in his power to ensure those responsible for Alexander's death are held accountable for his murder."

"Alexander, like the investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, was a good friend of mine and a fierce critic of the ongoing human rights atrocities and war crimes in Chechnya that have been a hallmark of Vladimir Putin's Presidency. Their murders clearly illustrate the extent to which Putin's political critics are at risk in Russia, and now even here in London. "

"It is crucial that those of us who cannot remain silent in the face of this flagrant violation of human rights, continue with their endeavours, and stand up to Putin and his gangster politics. "

"We, the Chechnya Peace Forum, will continue our campaign to support the extradition of Andrei Lugovoi and to ensure that justice is seen to be done for both Alexander and his family. We will do everything we can to keep this issue in the public eye."

Notes to Editors:

Ivar Amundsen is Director of the Chechnya Peace Forum, a human rights organisation based in London which seeks to promote the cause of democracy and human rights in Chechnya by bringing the humanitarian crisis there to greater international attention.

A letter initiated by the Chechnya Peace Forum was published in the *Independent* on May 7 calling for President Putin to use the last year of his tenure to restore peace and justice to Chechnya. The letter was signed by more than 100 members of Britain's political and cultural elite. Signatories included Sir Tom Stoppard, Lord Giddens, Lord Bragg, Ian McEwan, Ken Loach, Peter Tatchell, André Glucksmann, Noel Malcolm, Alain de Botton, Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP, Rt Hon Charles Kennedy MP and Rt Hon Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP. A copy of the letter can be seen at <http://comment.independent.co.uk/letters/article2519068.ece>