

U.S. Seeks Justice for Kashin

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Protesters holding a portrait of Oleg Kashin outside Kiev's Russian Embassy on Tuesday. **Gleb Garanich**

Outrage over the gruesome weekend beating of Kommersant reporter Oleg Kashin grew as the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International called for justice — and the authorities assigned their best investigators to the case.

Prominent reporter and blogger Kashin, 30, was beaten with a metal rod near his apartment building in downtown Moscow early Saturday.

Kashin, who suffered a head trauma, broken upper and lower jaws, and a broken leg and fingers, has undergone several surgeries and remained hospitalized in a drug-induced coma Tuesday.

Kashin's wife, Yevgenia Milova, said doctors were now treating his broken fingers, in an apparent sign that more serious injuries had been cared for, Interfax reported.

Kashin may be able to talk after he is taken off artificial ventilation, which will happen within

five days, Vitaly Frantsuzov, head of the Moscow hospital where Kashin is being treated, told journalists.

“His condition has certain positive dynamics,” Frantsuzov said, without elaborating, Interfax reported.

The investigation into the beating will be headed by experts from the Prosecutor General's Office's Investigative Committee who have solved a number of high-profile cases, including that of serial killer Alexander Pichushkin, captured in 2006 and subsequently jailed for life on 48 counts of murder, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

No suspects were named Tuesday, but a law enforcement source told RIA-Novosti that the two attackers had an accomplice who waited for them in a getaway car.

Kashin's supporters opened the web site Olegkashin.ru as part of a campaign to find and punish the attackers. Single-person pickets calling for justice continued for a fourth day Tuesday near Moscow's police headquarters.

Legislation to make attacks on journalists punishable with up to life in prison was to be introduced Tuesday to the State Duma by United Russia Deputy Boris Reznik, Interfax said.

U.S. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley told journalists in Washington on Monday that the United States condemned the attack.

The United States "calls on Russian authorities to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice," he said, according to a transcript posted on the State Department's web site.

Amnesty International urged Russia to protect journalists working in the country.

The rights watchdog noted in a statement that a 2008 attack on Khimki journalist Mikhail Beketov, which left him brain-damaged, remains unsolved.

Beketov arrived in a wheelchair at a Khimki court Tuesday to attend a hearing in a defamation lawsuit filed against him by the town's mayor, Vladimir Strelchenko, whom Beketov criticized over the partial destruction of the Khimki forest for a highway.

Strelchenko said Tuesday that he has proposed a settlement on unspecified terms but saw no reason to drop the lawsuit, Interfax reported.

Meanwhile, Vasily Yakemenko, head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, filed a defamation lawsuit against prominent art dealer Marat Gelman, who has linked him to the attack on Kashin, who had written about Yakemenko's alleged relationship with a young, female pro-Kremlin activist.

Defamation lawsuits against Ekho Moskvyy radio host and Moscow Times columnist Yulia Latynina and opposition leader Boris Nemstov are to follow within days, Yakemenko's spokeswoman Kristina Potupchik wrote on her blog.

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