

Khimki Journalist Left With Brain Damage After Attack Dies

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mikhail Beketov, the newspaper editor and environmental activist from Khimki who was left crippled after a brutal attack that supporters linked to his criticism of a local highway project, has died. He was 55.

Beketov died in a Khimki hospital on Monday after suffocating while eating, his lawyer Stalina Guriyevich said.

"He choked after he ate something and was delivered to a Khimki hospital, where he died shortly after," Guriyevich said by phone. She added that she linked his death to Beketov's poor health since the attack on him in 2008.

In November of that year, the journalist was found bloodied and unconscious near his home after being severely beaten.

Beketov suffered brain damage and lost the ability to speak as a result of the attack, after which one leg and multiple fingers had to be amputated. "He tried to live normally, and to read, but how can you do so when you are missing your speech, a leg and many fingers?" Guriyevich said.

As editor and owner of the Khimkinskaya Pravda newspaper, which he financed out of his own pocket, Beketov had campaigned against the \$8 billion highway connecting Moscow and St. Petersburg that runs through an old forest close to Khimki, a northeastern Moscow suburb.

He had been a staunch critic of the local administration, which he accused of corruption in relation to the highway project. Before the attack, he had said he received threats over his critical articles about the administration's plans to fell clusters of trees. He even had to be transferred to a Moscow hospital after receiving a series of threatening phone calls while hospitalized after the attack in Khimki.

"He believed to the last day that the thugs who mutilated him will be found and punished. He did not live to see it," Guriyevich [wrote](#) on Twitter.

Fellow environmentalist Yevgenia Chirikova, who has become a prominent opposition activist because of the highway dispute, blamed local authorities for Beketov's death.

"Misha knew about the [imminent] attempt on his life and warned: If something happens to me — look in the Khimki administration," she [wrote](#) on Twitter.

The attack on Beketov occurred shortly before a local court was to begin hearing a libel suit filed against him by Vladimir Strelchenko, then the mayor of Khimiki.

Beketov had accused Strelchenko of organizing another attack on him. He lost that suit in 2010.

Strelchenko, a former Afghan war veteran and close associate of former Moscow region Governor Boris Gromov, resigned in 2012.

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