

Turkey Detains 2 Suspects in High-Profile Murder of Chechen Activist

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Turkish authorities have arrested two men suspected of killing a Chechen activist last year in a high-profile murder that was greeted by the country's Chechen population with accusations of Russian involvement.

Medet Ünlü, a businessman and activist who opposed the current authorities in the Russian republic of Chechnya and advocated its independence, was killed in his office in Ankara on May 23, 2013. He had been serving as honorary consul for the unrecognized Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in Turkey at the time of his death.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria was proclaimed in 1991 by rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev, who declared the republic's sovereignty and secession from Russia at that time. The self-proclaimed republic fought two brutal wars of independence with Russia that ended in Moscow bringing Chechnya firmly back under its control.

Since 2000, some officials of the Ichkerian government have continued to support the republic in exile.

Ünlü's killing last year triggered accusations among Turkey's Chechen community that Russian security services were behind it. Between 2008 and 2011, six Chechens have been killed in Turkey, some of them in broad daylight in the bustling city of Istanbul.

Shortly after the murder, Turkish news outlet Sabah reported that "men associated with [Chechen leader Ramzan] Kadyrov" had offered \$1 million for the hit.

Russian news website Newsru.com identified the two men detained Monday as 47-year-old Murat Aluch and 24-year-old Omar Peltek. Aluch — who according to Turkish media is an ex-convict with ties to organized crime — is the suspected triggerman, and Peltek the getaway driver.

Five people accused of having helped the pair to evade capture by police were also reportedly detained, though three of them have already been released, according to Newsru.com.

Turkish news website Hurriyet reported Tuesday that Aluch had confessed to the killing during interrogation, saying he had been paid \$40,000 by a Turkish man as advance payment for the murder.

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