

URGENT ACTION

DEATH THREATS AGAINST RUSSIAN JOURNALIST

Elena Milashina, a Russian journalist covering Chechnya at the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper, received death threats passed through an article on the Chechen government's online news agency *Grozny-Inform*.

An article containing death threats against **Elena Milashina** appeared on 19 May on the Chechen government-owned online news agency *Grozny-Inform*, set up by the Chechen Ministry of National Politics. It appeared shortly after the journalist reported that a 17-year-old Chechen girl was being forcibly married to a senior police officer, three times her senior and reportedly already married. This story received wide coverage in Russia and caused a public outcry. Ramzan Kadyrov, the Head of Chechnya, publicly supported the senior police officer and via his Instagram account, accused Elena Milashina of lying and interfering in the private lives of the Chechen people.

The article on *Grozny-Inform* draws comparisons between Elena Milashina and another Novaya Gazeta journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, who was assassinated in 2006. Among Anna Politkovskaya's convicted killers were two individuals from Chechnya as well as former Russian law enforcement officials. The author claims that Elena Milashina, like Anna Politkovskaya, is being used by "the West" to "throw dirt at her own country". According to the article, Anna Politkovskaya's murder was arranged by Russia's foreign enemies at a "suitable moment", and now Elena Milashina's turn is approaching to be their next "sacrifice".

On 2 June, two weeks after the article initially appeared, the Chechen authorities announced a meeting to protest the "propaganda war against Chechnya and Russia" waged – according to them – by human rights defenders and media outlets such as Novaya Gazeta, Kommersant, radio station Echo of Moscow, and OpenRussia. This initiative by the Chechen authorities, later cancelled, adds weight to the thinly-veiled death threats against Elena Milashina as she continues to work in Chechnya.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Urging the Russian authorities to ensure effective protection for Elena Milashina and all other independent journalists working in the North Caucasus and anywhere else in Russia, in accordance with their wishes;
- Asking the authorities to publicly condemn all threats against journalists and human rights defenders, including those made in the article threatening Elena Milashina published in *Grozny-Inform*;
- Calling on the authorities to promptly and thoroughly investigate any threats and attacks against journalists and human rights defenders in the North Caucasus and anywhere else in Russia, and to ensure fair trial procedures against anyone found responsible for such attacks.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 JULY 2015 TO:

Chairman of the Investigation Committee
Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation
Tekhnicheskij pereulok, dom 2
105005 Moscow, Russian Federation
Fax: +7 499 265 90 77
+7 499 265 97 75
Twitter: @sledcom_rf
Salutation: Dear Chairman

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
ul. Ilyinka, 23
103132 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 910 21 34
Twitter: @KremlinRussia
@KremlinRussia_E (English)
Salutation: Dear President

Colonel-General Vladimir Aleksandrovich Kolokoltsev
Ministry of the Interior of the Russian Federation, Ul. Zhitnaya 16
119094 Moscow, Russian Federation
Email: via web
https://mvd.ru/request_main (in Russian)
Fax: +7 495 667 7908
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to
Minister of the Interior

President of the Russian Federation

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Elena Milashina has been working for several years on Chechnya and has travelled extensively in the region reporting on human rights issues in the North Caucasus for the Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

Two days before the wedding of the 17-year-old girl and the senior police officer on 16 May, Elena Milashina was stopped by police as she was driving to the village where the bride-to-be lived. The police told her they were concerned about her safety.

Throughout her journalistic career, Elena Milashina has faced numerous threats and harassment in connection with her courageous reporting. On 4 April 2012 she was attacked by three unknown men in a Moscow suburb and repeatedly kicked and punched on the head. Three men were found responsible for the attack later that year, but Elena Milashina has publicly expressed her doubts that these men were involved in the attack, and raised concern about the fairness of the subsequent trial in which two of the men were sentenced.

In 2013 she was given the Women of Courage Award by the US Secretary of State. The article in *Grozny-Inform* titled “The USA Moves Its Pawns” concludes with a reference to this award adding “Let’s hope this [award] will not be post-mortem”. The tone and the content of the article, and the context in which it is being published, in a government-owned media outlet, gives strong reason to fear that the death threats against Elena Milashina are serious.

Elena Milashina often cooperates with the Joint Mobile Group, an initiative by lawyers from different Russian regions working in shifts in Chechnya on behalf of local victims of human rights violations. A mob ransacked the Group’s Grozny office and flat on 3 June (see Amnesty International’s Urgent Action: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR46/1802/2015/en/>).

In early June 2015, Novaya Gazeta appealed to the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation to investigate whether the article in *Grozny-Inform* violates Russian law and asked the law enforcement agencies to ensure protection for Elena Milashina.

Name: Elena Milashina

Gender m/f: f

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