

URGENT ACTION

LAWYER'S MOTHER DETAINED IN CHECHNYA

On 20 January, Zarema Musaeva, mother of a human rights lawyer from Chechnya (North Caucasus), was abducted from her apartment in Nizhnii Novgorod (Central Russia) by at least seven men. They spoke Chechen and drove vehicles with Chechen number plates. Later, Chechen authorities confirmed she was in their custody but refused her lawyers permission to see her. Zarema Musaeva has committed no crime and must be immediately released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Igor Viktorovich Krasnov
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Russian Federation

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Genproc>

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Online form (Russian only): <https://ipriem.genproc.gov.ru/contacts/ipriem/send>

Dear Prosecutor General,

*I am deeply concerned about the abduction of **Zarema Musaeva**, on 20 January 2022, from her home in Nizhnii Novgorod by men who were later confirmed to be Chechen officials. On 21 January Chechen authorities reported that Zarema Musaeva was serving 15 days of administrative detention for “petty hooliganism”. She suffers a serious medical condition, which should preclude her administrative detention under Russian law, and she reportedly does not have access to vital medicines. She has been held incommunicado and her lawyers have been denied access to her, ostensibly because she refused their services. On 2 February, media reported that she had been detained on remand, initially for two months, on fabricated charges of using violence against a police officer, a crime punishable by up to 10 years’ imprisonment.*

For years, Zarema Musaeva’s next of kin have faced reprisals from the Chechen authorities. One of her sons complained of secret imprisonment and torture in 2015 – 2016 and of subsequent unfounded criminal prosecution. Her husband, federal judge Saydi Yangulbaev, was forced to resign in 2015 and subjected to an unlawful house search, and her oldest son, human rights lawyer Abubakar Yangulbaev received anonymous threats. On 21 January 2022, Head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov publicly threatened that the right “place” for members of their family was “either in prison or in the ground”.

Zarema Musaeva has committed no crime and is unlawfully deprived of her liberty by the Chechen authorities in retaliation for her family members’ revelations about the abuses they had suffered and for their activism.

I urge you to take all the necessary steps to stop Zarema Musaeva’s unfounded criminal prosecution and ensure that she is immediately released, that the circumstances of her abduction and unlawful deprivation of liberty are effectively investigated, and those responsible are held accountable in fair trial proceedings.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In December 2021, human rights lawyer Abubakar Yangulbaev reported that 21 of his relatives in Chechnya were abducted by members of local authorities, placed in secret detention and subjected to ill-treatment and threats – alongside dozens of members of other families, mostly relatives of exiled critics of the Chechen authorities. While most of Abubakar Yangulbaev's family members were released, two of them remain in police custody. In January, he reported that other family members were similarly abducted. There is no reliable information on these events, including the identity and fate of all those concerned. In December 2021, Abubakar Yangulbaev himself was briefly detained in Pyatigorsk (North Caucasus), interrogated as a witness in a criminal case concerning "justification of terrorism" (Article 205.2 of the Russian Criminal Code) and released.

On 20 January, his mother, Zarema Musaeva, was apprehended by the Chechen police in Nizhnii Novgorod, Central Russia, where she was living with her husband, retired federal judge Saydi Yangulbaev and their daughter. At least seven men, who were speaking Chechen and were driving vehicles with Chechen registration number plates, came to their apartment and forcibly took her away under a false pretext that she needed to testify as a witness in a criminal case. A video captured by CCTV cameras has since been published, which shows her being taken into a snowy street wearing no winter coat and no shoes. The men forced her into a car and drove away.

Zarema Musaeva's fate and whereabouts were unknown until the following day when Chechen authorities confirmed that she was in their custody. They claimed she attacked a police officer and was given 15 days of administrative detention for "petty hooliganism". Later, media reported that Zarema Musaeva stood accused of using violence against police officers and would face criminal charges.

Zarema Musaeva suffers from diabetes and requires medications and specialist healthcare which, under Russian law, should exempt her from administrative detention. When she was apprehended, the police did not allow to take her insulin and other medication with her. There is no reliable information on whether she receives medication and adequate healthcare in detention. The lawyers who have been hired by her family and Abubakar Yangulbaev's colleagues, have been unlawfully refused permission to see her. On 29 January, a member of Chechen police showed them a letter purportedly written and signed by Zarema Musaeva which stated that she was refusing their services and that she refused to be involved in any investigative activities or other procedural actions because of her poor health.

On 21 January, Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov issued an explicit death threat via his social media channel on the Telegram against Abubakar Yangulbaev's family who he accused of "deeply hurting the honour" of the Chechens.

Over the years, the Chechen authorities have targeted their critics as well as their exiled critics' relatives and forced them to issue apologies to the Chechen leadership on camera or subjected them to other reprisals. In 2020, moderator of 1ADAT, a popular Telegram channel critical of the Chechen authorities, Salman Tepsurkaev (who was 19 years old at the time), was abducted by unknown persons believed to be Chechen law enforcement officers and later appeared in a video published on the Internet where he is seen making such apologies and is seen being subjected to sexual violence. There has since been no news of his fate and whereabouts. In October, the ECtHR found Russia responsible for his arbitrary, unacknowledged detention and torture, and for the failure to effectively investigate his torture (<https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-212397>).

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 March 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Zarema Musaeva (she/her)