



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

A Call to Ensure Safety of Elena Milashina and Have a Proper Investigation into the Threats against Her

Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum is outraged by the silence and nonfeasance of Russian authorities in the case of the threats expressed by Ramzan Kadyrov, Head of the Chechen Republic (Russia), against Elena Milashina, a journalist of the “Novaya Gazeta” media outlet.

For many years, Elena Milashina has been working for “Novaya Gazeta”. In recent times, she has been focusing on journalistic investigations of human rights violations in the North Caucasus, in particular in the Republic of Chechnya.

The threats, which, in our opinion, include death threats, were published on 13 April 2020 on Ramzan Kadyrov’s Telegram account¹. The authorship of this publication was not challenged by him. While criticising the media outlet, Ramzan Kadyrov, among others, stated: ‘If you [the security services] want us to commit a crime and become criminals, then say so. Someone will take the burden of responsibility and will be punished under the law. He will be put in prison and released afterwards!’

We suppose that the trigger for Kadyrov’s response was Elena Milashina’s article “A Coronavirus Death Is the Lesser Evil” that was published a day earlier². The article tells about a severe situation faced by the Chechen citizens during the coronavirus lockdown. We think Kadyrov’s statement includes a direct threat against the authors of the abovementioned article.

Meanwhile, Dmitri Peskov, Press Officer for the President of the Russian Federation, announced that the Kremlin did not consider that statement by the Head of the Chechen Republic ‘forbidden or illegal’ and that he had his right to express himself in that way under current severe conditions³.

Considering the fact that Elena Milashina was attacked in Grozny, the Chechen capital, on 6 February 2020⁴ and the case remains uninvestigated until now, we assume that the life of the journalist might be in grave danger.

¹ See https://t.me/RKadyrov_95/872 and <https://cpi.org/2020/04/chechen-leader-threatens-journalist-elena-milashin.php>

² See <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/04/12/84851-smert-ot-koronavirusa-menshee-zlo> (limited access, due to a request by the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Russian Federation)

³ See <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2020/04/16/nothing-unusual-here>

⁴ See <https://cpi.org/2020/02/russian-journalist-elena-milashina-attacked-in-che.php>

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum demands from the Russian authorities to ensure safety of Elena Milashina, carry out an immediate investigation of the attack and the threats against her, and provide favourable conditions for the work of the journalists in the Russian Federation⁵.

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The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 182 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members or supporters of the Forum. It aims at development of cooperation of civil society organisations from Russia and EU and greater participation of NGOs in the EU-Russia dialogue. The Forum has been actively involved, inter alia, in the questions of facilitation of visa regime, development of civic participation, protection of the environment and human rights, dealing with history and civic education.

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⁵ See also further statements by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, which are related to the situation in the North Caucasus, in particular <https://eu-russia-csf.org/wp-content/uploads/statements/en/StatementOyubTitiev19.03.2019.pdf>, <https://eu-russia-csf.org/wp-content/uploads/statements/en/StatementOlegKozlovsky16.10.2018.pdf> and <https://eu-russia-csf.org/wp-content/uploads/statements/en/StatementCommitteePreventionTorture10.03.2016.pdf>