

15 December 2016

### **Russian Federation – Death threats against human rights defenders Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov and Elena Milashina for exposing corruption in Chechnya**

On 9 December 2016, human rights defender Mr. **Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov** gave a press conference in Moscow regarding death threats and reprisals made against him and his family from high ranked Chechen officials following his exposure of corruption in Chechnya. He filed the complaint to the head of the Federal Investigative Committee and to the Ministry of Internal Affairs seeking State protection. Ms Elena Milashina, a human rights defender and journalist has also received numerous threats for her coverage of Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov's story.

[Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov](#) is a human rights defender from Kenkhi, a mountain village in Chechnya's remote Charoi region, whose infrastructure has been extensively damaged and destroyed as a result of the recent Chechen wars and seasonal landslides. Since 2010, Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov has been demanding the Chechen government launch the reconstruction of the village as the required funding was allocated by the Russian government in 2004. In April 2016, Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov recorded a video, which was then widely shared via online media platforms and television networks, where he voiced his concerns about the continuous disregard of the Chechen authority vis-à-vis of the situation of the village and accused Chechen authorities of corruption and misuse of public funds. Since sharing the video, Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov has been subjected to death threats against him and his family, intimidations, arson of his home, and the confiscation of his passport. His family members have also been physically attacked.

[Elena Milashina](#) is a human rights defender and investigative journalist working for Novaya Gazeta, a leading Russian independent newspaper. She documents cases of enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial executions, torture, and persecution in Chechnya and other republics in the Northern Caucasus, continuing investigations started by her assassinated colleagues Ms [Anna Politkovskaya](#) and Ms [Natalia Estemirova](#). Elena Milashina has received numerous threats from individuals who claimed to be high ranking Chechen officials, in connection with her coverage of Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov's case.

On 9 December 2016, Novaya Gazeta, a leading Russian independent paper, the human rights organisation Memorial and Human Rights Watch held a press conference in Moscow, where Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov made a statement regarding the death threats and retaliatory actions by high ranking Chechen officials against him and his family. The human rights defender asked for state protection and signed a complaint addressed to the head of Russian's Federal Investigative Committee, asking to investigate the Chechen officials' actions.

On 2 November 2016, Ramzan Dzhahalalidinov and his wife, Ms Nasirat Dzhahalalidinova, were forcibly taken by police officers to Grozny for a meeting with Chechnya's Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr Apti Alautdinov. During the meeting Ramzan and Nasirat Dzhahalalidinov were rebuked for their communication with Russian human rights defenders and journalists, such as Elena Milashina, and for

their complaints against Chechnyan authorities. Aпти Alautdinov reminded them of the assassinations of human rights journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was murdered in 2006, of human rights defender Natalia Estemirova, who was murdered in 2009 as well as of the murder of Mr Boris Nemtsov, a pro-democracy politician in 2015. Aпти Alautdinov threatened Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov, saying that he and Elena Milashina will meet the same fate if they don't remain silent. Following the meeting, Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov and his wife were driven back to Kenkhi by police officers who also threatened them and confiscated Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov's passport so that he would not be able to leave Chechnya. Following this incident, Ramazan Dzhahalaldinov fled the next morning at dawn, without documents, crossing into Dagestan. His family remains in Chechnya and cannot leave because the regular road out of the village, as well as Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov's home are under surveillance and tightly controlled by Chechen law enforcement officials.

This is not the first time that the human rights defender was forced to flee Chechnya. In May 2016, following the release of the video accusing Chechen authorities of corruption, Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov received threats from authorities and was compelled to leave his family and flee Kenkhi for Dagestan. On 15 May 2016, while the human rights defender was in hiding, local officials physically attacked his wife and eldest daughter, drove all four members of his family to the border with Dagestan, and ordered them to leave Chechnya. Local officials also threatened to kill the members of Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov's family if they did not convince him to retract his critical statements against the Chechen authorities. That same night, Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov's home was subjected to arson.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the reprisals and the death threats against Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov and his family members, as well as the threats against human rights journalist Elena Milashina, which it believes to be related to their legitimate and peaceful human rights work.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of the Russian Federation to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov and Elena Milashina, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Elena Milashina, Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov and their family members;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical attack and death threats against Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov's family members, as well as the arson of the human rights defender's home;
4. Immediately and unconditionally remove all restrictions on the free movement of Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov, returning his unlawfully confiscated passport, and cease all further forms of surveillance or harassment against him and his family, as it is believed that these measures are not only solely related to his legitimate human rights activities but, furthermore, constitute a direct transgression of the rights of Ramzan Dzhahalaldinov and his family members;

5. Ensure that the ongoing investigation into the murders of Natalia Estemirova and Anna Politkovskaya be thorough and impartial, with a view to bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
  
6. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.