

31 January 2019

Russia: Death threats sent to LGBT rights defender, Igor Kochetkov

On 29 January 2019, a video containing insults and a death threat came to the attention of the **Russian LGBT Network**. The abuse and threats were directed at the Network’s Programs Director, **Igor Kochetkov**. It is not clear when the video was first published online, but it began being shared widely on Facebook after the human rights defender filed a complaint with the Investigative Committee about the harassment of 14 individuals in Chechnya on the basis of their sexual orientation.

[Igor Kochetkov](#) is the Programs Director of the Russian LGBT Network, a human rights organisation that works on LGBT issues. In April 2017, the Russian LGBT Network shone a light on a massive wave of detentions and torture of individuals who were understood to be part of the Chechen LGBT community. The Network subsequently provided means for protective relocation to more than 114 people. Since the end of December 2018, information about at least 14 detentions of individuals from the LGBT community was received by the Russian LGBT Network via its hotline.

On 29 January 2019, Igor Kochetkov filed a complaint with the Investigative Committee of Russia requesting an investigation into cases of abduction, arrest, torture and degrading treatment of 14 members of the LGBT community in Chechnya. The complaint included details of an individual who was arrested and reportedly killed while in detention, as well as details of an individual who was arrested at the end of December and whose whereabouts remain unknown.

Shortly after the complaint was filed, a video filmed by a man identifying himself ‘Ali Baskhanov’ from the Chechen capital of Grozny, came to the attention of the Russian LGBT Network. In the video, Ali Baskhanov calls the LGBT community “scum” and claims that there are no LGBT people in Chechnya. He refers to Igor Kochetkov as “lice”, “son of the devil” and recommends that he not come to Chechnya or it would be his “final destination”. The man tells the human rights defender to “disappear” and to “never come back”. Igor Kochetkov has already reported the received death threats to the police and to the Investigative Committee.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the continuous deterioration of the situation of the human rights defenders working on LGBT issues in Chechnya. It believes that the death threats received by Igor Kochetkov are the direct consequence of his legitimate and peaceful work for the protection of human rights.

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 Igor Kochetkov, 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 Igor Kochetkov;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Chechnya are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.