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Russia: Crew against Torture office in Pyatigorsk raided

On 14 April 2023, law enforcement officers in Pyatigorsk raided the premises of the North Caucasus division of **Crew against Torture's** office in Pyatigorsk. The Head of the North Caucasus Division of the Crew against Torture, woman human rights defender **Ekaterina Vanslova**, was present during the raid. The law enforcement officials seized a flash drive and an old laptop.

[Crew against Torture](#) is an informal union of Russian lawyers who, in their individual capacity, continue the work they used to do as a Russian-based human rights organisation "Committee Against Torture" (CAT). CAT was shut down on 10 June 2022 after it was listed as a foreign agent. CAT, established in 2000, used to be a prominent human rights organisation in Russia which investigated allegations of torture by state agents and represented victims of torture's interests in the investigative bodies and the court, including the European Court of Human Rights. Human rights defenders who used to work with CAT were regularly subjected to defamation campaigns, physical attacks, detentions, and judicial persecution because of their peaceful human rights work. Ekaterina Vanslova is a woman human rights defender and a lawyer, who leads Crew against Torture's work in the North Caucasus.

On 14 April 2023, seven law enforcement officers from Pyatigorsk Investigative Committee raided the office of the North Caucasus division of Crew against Torture in Pyatigorsk. The raid was sanctioned by the Investigator from North Osetiya. The Head of the North Caucasus Division of the Crew against Torture, woman human rights defender Ekaterina Vanslova, was present during the raid. The law enforcement officials seized a flash drive and an old laptop. According to Ekaterina Vanslova, the authorities targeted the office because of one of the torture cases that Crew against Torture is litigating in the North Osetiya region. The woman human rights defender reported that due to security precautions in place by Crew against Torture, none of the documents related to the case were seized by the law enforcement officers.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the raid in Crew against Torture office in Pyatigorsk and recognises that this attack is informed by their legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders condemns continued targeting of human rights defenders in Russian Federation, as well as Russia's continuous effort to dismantle human rights work in the country and further isolate human rights defenders.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Russian Federation to:

1. Cease targeting human rights organisation Crew against Torture and its members for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that Crew against Torture can continue their human rights work countering torture and inhumane treatment in the North Caucasus;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Russian Federation's international human rights obligations and commitments.