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Russia: Woman human rights defender Svetlana Anokhina faces criminal charges on “discreditation of the Russian army”

On 18 April 2023, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation in the city of Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan, launched a criminal case against woman human rights defender **Svetlana Anokhina** for an alleged violation of part 1, Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation that concerns “public dissemination of deliberately false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces.” If charged, the woman human rights defender may face up to three years of prison.

[Svetlana Anokhina](#) is a prominent woman human rights defender, journalist, and outspoken advocate for women’s rights from Dagestan. She is the editor-in-chief of Daptar, the only online media outlet in the North Caucasus that focuses on women’s rights. In 2020, along with other female activists, she founded the volunteer initiative group “Marem” that aims to help women from Dagestan and other North Caucasus republics who face the threat of domestic violence or death. “Marem” helps them to organise evacuations, find temporary accommodation, and provides legal and psychological support to victims.

On 18 April 2023, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation in the city of Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan, launched a criminal case against woman human rights defender Svetlana Anokhina for an alleged violation of part 1, Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation that concerns “public dissemination of deliberately false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces.” The woman human rights defender found out about the investigation against her through the media. According to the Investigative Committee, a year ago, in April 2022, Svetlana Anokhina circulated so-called “deliberately false information” about the activities of Russian military troops in Ukraine. Currently, the investigation is said to be at the stage of collecting evidence. While Svetlana Anokhina is not aware what social media post she is being prosecuted for, she reported that in April 2022, law enforcement officials visited her mother, who resides in Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan, showed her the printouts of the woman human rights defender’s Instagram posts and forced her to sign some documents. Svetlana Anokhina suspects that the document the law enforcement forced her mother to sign aimed to confirm that the social media accounts printouts referenced an account that belongs to the woman human rights defender.

If convicted, the woman human rights defender could face up to three years in prison. This is not the first instance that the Russian Federation targets human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists for their public condemnation of Russia’s war against Ukraine. In 2022, the Investigative Committee of the Republic of Ingushetia launched three criminal cases against woman human rights defender [Isabella Evloeva](#). In the summer of 2022, human rights defender and lawyer [Dmitry Talantov](#) was arrested and placed in pre-trial detention for the anti-war statements that he posted on Facebook. Recently, in March 2023, human rights defender [Oleg Orlov](#) was put on trial for his anti-war public protests and social media posts.

Front Line Defenders condemns the criminal persecution of woman human rights defender Svetlana Anokhina for the so-called “public dissemination of deliberately false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces.” Front Line Defenders urges that the expansion of the Russian Federation’s Criminal Code with a set of articles against “discreditation” and “fakes”

against the Russian military fosters censorship in the country. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern about the systemic grave misuse of the set of new censorship laws that are disproportionately used to silence human rights defenders, lawyers, and journalists.

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

1. Immediately cease persecution of woman human rights defender Svetlana Anokhina;
2. Repeal the set of Articles of the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation that are designed to target so-called “discreditation” and “fakes” against the actions of the Russian military as they limit freedom of speech and are being used by the authorities to disproportionately target human rights defenders and journalists;
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.