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**Russia/North Caucasus: Women human rights defenders Svetlana Anokhina and Maysarat Kilyashanova attacked and detained during raid on women's shelter for survivors of gender-based violence**

On 10 June 2021, unknown men together with police officers raided a women's shelter for gender-based violence survivors in Makhachkala in order to forcibly return Chechen woman Khalimat Taramova, who had been staying at the shelter, to her family in the Chechen Republic. Women human rights defenders **Svetlana Anokhina** and **Maysarat Kilyashanova**, who were present at the time of the raid, were reportedly beaten and detained together with 3 other women. The women were subsequently released and Khalimat Taramova was forcibly returned to her family in the Chechen Republic.

[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 organize evacuations, find temporary accommodation, and provides legal and psychological support to victims. [Maysarat Kilyashanova](#) is a woman human rights defender, volunteer of the initiative group "Marem", illustrator and cartoonist.

On 10 June 2021, a police officer came to the women's shelter for gender-based violence survivors run by the "Marem" group in Makhachkala to interrogate Chechen woman Khalimat Taramova, who had been staying at the shelter having fled her home in the Chechen Republic because of domestic violence due to her sexual orientation. Khalimat Taramova had reportedly been placed on the missing persons list, even though she publicly stated that she left home by her own free will via a [video](#) posted on the internet three days earlier. Following the interrogation, Svetlana Anokhina contacted the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Dagestan and asked for protection for the shelter as unknown men, presumed to be from the Chechen Republic, were spotted nearby. According to the woman human rights defender, the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs told her that the police would guard the shelter until the following morning.

Later on 10 June 2021, the police officer who had interrogated Khalimat Taramova requested to come into the shelter to provide protection for the women. When Svetlana Anokhina opened the door, several police officers and around 20 unknown men with guns and body armour, presumed to be from the Chechen Republic, entered the shelter and detained Svetlana Anokhina, Maysarat Kilyashanova and three other women. The women were transferred to the Police Department in the Leninsky District of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia Administration for the city of Makhachkala. While Svetlana Anokhina was being detained by police, she was reportedly dragged by her legs and arms, and hit several times resulting in an ambulance being called to the Police Department to assist the woman human rights defender. Maysarat Kilyashanova also suffered bruises on her hands while being detained. Both Svetlana Anokhina and Maysarat Kilyashanova, were taken for a narcological examination during their time in detention. The detained women were all accused of "disobedience to a lawful order of a police officer" under Part 1, Article 19.3 of the Administrative Code. Later on 10 June 2021, Khalimat Taramova, who refused to sign a statement that she had been detained against her will by the women's shelter, was forcibly returned to her family in the Chechen Republic. On 11 June 2021, the Leninsky District Court of Makhachkala dropped the cases

against the detained women "for the absence of an offense event" and they were released from police custody.

On 12 June 2021, Chechen Republic's minister for national politics, external ties, and information Akhmed Dudayev stated in a public [broadcast](#) that "well-coordinated and professional efforts of police in the Chechen Republic and Dagestan had prevented an attempt to abduct Taramova by a fifth column in Russia," clearly referring here to the women human rights defenders who run the women's shelter in Makhachkala. On 14 June 2021, state television in the Chechen Republic aired an [interview](#) with Khalimat Taramova and the Government Commissioner for Human Rights, where broadcasters declared that "Taramova was used to strike a blow against the traditional values of the Chechen people." Women human rights defenders from the "Marem" group consider this video to be a direct threat to them and their work, as they are being accused of abducting Khalimat Taramova.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the attacks and detention of women human rights defenders Svetlana Anokhina and Maysarat Kilyaskhanova, and other women from the "Marem" group shelter and volunteers, as it believes they are being targeted solely as a result of their work in promoting and protecting women's rights in the North Caucasus. Front Line Defenders condemns the intimidation and targeting of the women human rights defenders and considers it an attempt to threaten, silence and stop the work of human rights defenders protecting women's rights in the Chechen Republic and other republics of the North Caucasus.

**Front Line Defenders urges Russian authorities to:**

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Svetlana Anokhina, Maysarat Kilyaskhanova and other women human rights defenders from the "Marem" group;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks against Svetlana Anokhina and Maysarat Kilyaskhanova, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Hold accountable those responsible for the removal of domestic violence survivors from safe spaces and forced return to their families;
4. Take necessary measures to ensure that government officials and other public figures refrain from making statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of human rights defenders;
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.