



#### DUBLIN

Front Line Defenders – Head Office  
First Floor, Avoca Court  
Temple Road, Blackrock  
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750  
fax +353 1 233 8695

#### BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office  
Square Marie-Louise 72  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383  
fax +32 2 230 0028

24 May 2023

### Russia: Woman human rights defender and lawyer Elena Pershakova's apartment raided

On 20 May 2023, law enforcement officers in Perm raided the apartment of woman human rights defender and lawyer **Elena Pershakova** for six hours. During the raid, the authorities seized the woman human rights defender's phone, laptop, hard drive and work-related documents. The Federal Security Service in the city of Perm scheduled Elena Pershakova's questioning for 24 May 2023. It is not yet clear if there are any charges being brought against the woman human rights defender or if she will be questioned as a witness.

[Elena Pershakova](#) is a woman human rights defender and lawyer. She is head of the legal team of the Public Verdict Foundation. The Public Verdict Foundation was established in February 2004 as a non-profit organisation offering legal assistance to victims of human rights violations by law enforcement officers in Russia. The Public Verdict Foundation works to promote a climate of non-tolerance of abusive law enforcement practices in Russia, and to ensure civilian oversight of Russian law enforcement. In her litigation work, Elena Pershakova focuses on civic freedoms.

Elena Pershakova has been representing Perm Memorial, a human rights organisation and member of the International Memorial Network, since 2019, when representatives of the organisation were targeted during an expedition into the Perm region's Galyashor tract. The purpose of this expedition was to study the cemetery of the Lithuanian and Polish settlement, which was established as a result of Soviet occupation and a policy of forced displacement of various ethnic groups in the region. The Russian authorities accused representatives of the Perm Memorial of "illegal occupation of forest land" and charged the local resident who hosted the expedition with illegal registration of foreign citizens. The documents that were seized during the raid on Elena Pershakova's apartment pertained to her work on this case.

The raid on Elena Pershakova's apartment in Perm is related to the persecution of the chairperson of the Perm Memorial, Robert Latypov, and the chairperson of the Centre of Historic Memory, Aleksandr Chernyshov. Both are being accused of attempted smuggling of cultural property, which is a criminal offence as stipulated by part 2 of Article 226.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. According to the authorities, the representatives of the Perm Memorial and the Centre of Historic Memory are being targeted for trying to transfer the organisations' archives outside of Russia. On 19 May 2023, a series of raids took place in the houses of representatives of Perm Memorial, Igor Averkiyev, Nadezhda Agysheva and Tatiana Margolina, and a representative of the Centre of Historic Memory, Vera Sedinina. The raids also targeted journalists Tatiana Cherepanova and Oksana Acaulenko and attorneys Sergey Trutnev and Sergey Maximov.

Front Line Defenders expresses grave concerns about the raid on woman human rights defender Elena Pershakova's house. Front Line Defenders sees the Russian authorities' use of raids against human rights defenders as a method of intimidation and suppression of their human rights activities. Despite many calls, the Russian authorities continue to systemically target human rights defenders and civil society organisations through trumped up charges and bogus lawsuits. Front Line Defenders condemns the Russian government's suppression of all spaces for human rights defenders who remain in the country and its radical and violent interference with defenders' vital and legitimate human rights work.

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

1. Cease targetting woman human rights defender Elena Pershakova for her non-violent and legitimate human rights work;
2. Immediately return all confiscated personal items and documents to the woman human rights defender and stop confiscating personal equipment of human rights defenders, as this is a direct interference with their ability to carry out their human rights work;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their 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.