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Independent Journalist Attacked in Beslan Suffered a Brain Injury

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Two independent journalists were attacked at a cemetery earlier this month in Beslan, while attending memorial services to mark the 12th anniversary of a school siege that claimed the lives of at least 385 people, including 186 children.

One of the reporters, Elena Kostyuchenko, now says her injuries from the attack are more serious than doctors thought initially. A follow-up brain scan shows a deeper lesion than was detected in the first MRI. Kostyuchenko says she has been told to avoid using a mobile phone for the next ten days, while physicians monitor her condition. She has asked people not to contact her, except for urgent matters.

On Sept. 3, Kostyuchenko and another journalist, Diana Khachatryan, were attacked by the caretaker of a cemetery in Beslan. "He grabbed us both by the collar and dragged us for about ten meters," Khachatryan told the Meduza news website. "We fell, and he started to beat us. He hit Lena in the face, screaming, 'Get out of here! I lost children!'"

Khachatryan says there were police officers present when the attack took place, but they made no effort to intervene. The two journalists left Beslan after the incident, saying they feared for their personal safety.

The attack at the cemetery was already the second assault on Kostyuchenko and Khachatryan that day. Earlier on Sept. 3, men confronted the two women at a school, taking Kostyuchenko's mobile phone and dousing her in green paint. Once again, Khachatryan says, police only watched and did nothing to stop or pursue the attackers.

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Diana and Lena at a school in Beslan after being attacked. / Mitya Aleshkovsky

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