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Escaped Chechen Domestic Violence Victim Reverses Story on State TV

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Khalimat Taramova previously said she fled by her own free will from “regular beatings and threats” by her family over her sexual orientation. **anokhinabesit / Instagram**

A Chechen woman who said she fled abuse in her home region for her sexual orientation has reneged on her initial statements in a Chechen state television interview.

Chechens who lose favor with the Russian republic's authorities regularly appear on television to give what human rights activists say are "forced" apologies.

Khalimat Taramova, 22, had previously recorded herself saying she fled Chechnya by her own free will to escape “regular beatings and threats” by her family due to her sexual orientation. Rights activists sounded the alarm over her safety after Chechen law enforcement officers raided the women’s shelter in neighboring Dagestan where Taramova was hiding and detained her last Thursday.

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In the Chechen state television interview that aired Monday, Tamarova said that her rights were not violated and that she doesn't remember how she ended up in the women's shelter.

"I don't remember coming to the shelter, everything seems like it was in a fog," said Tamarova, who is surrounded by four men including her father, senior Chechen official Ayub Taramov, during the interview.

When asked by the interviewer whether she's associated with an unnamed "organization," likely referring to the LGBT Network, Tambova said: "I have nothing to do with this organization, I'm outraged that the media are writing about me. ... I think it's wrong to start up such rumors if I don't take any part in it."

According to witness reports cited by the Russian LGBT Network rights group, Tamarova had threatened to jump from a fourth-floor balcony as security officers and her father stormed the shelter.

Anna Maylova, Tamarova's friend who helped her escape to the women's shelter, told the Novaya Gazeta newspaper that Tamarova resisted efforts to detain her, saying she "was dragged along the asphalt by force."

"[Tamarova] found herself victim of continuous persecution and abuse motivated by her sexual orientation to the point of beatings at the hand of family members and threats," the LGBT Network said in an emailed statement Sunday.

Veronika Lapina, international advocacy consultant for the Russian LGBT Network said in the rights group's statement that Tamarova may now be at risk of an "honor sentence" for "airing family business in public" by publicizing her cry for help.

Russia's republic of Chechnya has been accused of widespread human rights violations against LGBT people in recent years. Chechen officials dismiss the reports of gay persecution as "made up" and Kadyrov himself claims the region's population is exclusively heterosexual.

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