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Chechen Rights Lawyer's Mother 'Kidnapped' in Western Russia – NGO

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The mother of a Chechen rights lawyer and activist has been "kidnapped" in western Russia by Chechen law enforcement a month after dozens of his relatives were detained, an NGO that tracks torture reported Thursday.

The Committee Against Torture said masked men broke into the home of Abubakar Yangulbaev's family, using brute force against his relatives and lawyers in the city of Nizhny Novgorod.

Video filmed by Yangulbaev's sister showed violent scenes inside the family's apartment and masked men dragging away his mother, Zarema Musaeva.

They did not detain Yangulbaev's father Saydi Yangulbaev because he is a retired federal judge who enjoys immunity. Footage of the aftermath showed him with a bruised face.

Musaeva is diabetic and was not allowed to take insulin when she was dragged away, the

Yangulbaev family said in several interviews with independent Russian broadcasters. They added that she was awaiting coronavirus test results on the day of her detention and may have the illness.

Musaeva "lost consciousness in the stairwell," the Committee Against Torture said in a post on the Telegram messaging app. "Her life is in real danger."

It said the men, who introduced themselves as Chechen police officers, detained Musaeva on orders for her and her husband to appear as witnesses in a 2019 fraud case in Chechnya.

The NGO said Nizhny Novgorod traffic police officers arrived at the Yangulbaevs' home, but left after a "friendly chat" with one of the self-declared Chechen officers.

The regional Federal Security Service (FSB) office did not react to judge Yangulbaev's report of the kidnapping.

The Kremlin on Friday called the reports of Musaeva's kidnapping "strange" and "unconfirmed." President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov expressed confidence in the work of law enforcement "if there was a police report" filed, adding that Chechen security officers "shouldn't have a special status."

The Committee Against Torture said it filed an urgent appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner and the United Nations special rapporteur.

Musaeva's detention comes after six Chechen opposition activists reported dozens of their relatives being detained or kidnapped in late December.

Yangulbaev had estimated that around 40 of his relatives were detained by unidentified men wearing black uniforms, with their passports and phones seized.

Amnesty International called for Musaeva's immediate release.

"Will Russia's federal authorities once again ignore what's happening in Chechnya and pretend that they don't know about the Chechen authorities to silence critics through criminal intimidation and kidnapping of their relatives?" it said in a statement. "Or do they consider it acceptable?"

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