The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Novaya Gazeta Journalist Flees Russia Over Chechen Leader's Threats

February 04, 2022



Yelena Milashina has reported on alleged gay purges and other abuses in Chechnya. **Anna Artemyeva / Novaya Gazeta**

Independent journalist Yelena Milashina has fled Russia over threats from Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, her employer the Novaya Gazeta newspaper said in a statement Thursday.

Kadyrov characterized Milashina, who has reported on alleged gay purges and other abuses in Chechnya, and anti-torture activist Igor Kalyapin as "terrorists" in his threats against the family of a former Chechen judge.

"We've always destroyed terrorists and their accomplices. There's no difference between them and that's what we'll keep doing," Kadyrov said in a Jan. 23 social media post.

"For me, Kalyapin and Milashina are terrorists who earn money off the topic of the republic of Chechnya," the strongman said, calling on law enforcement to "detain these accomplices of terrorists."

Novaya Gazeta said it sent Milashina "on assignment" outside Russia "in view of the numerous personal threats leveled by prominent Chechen representatives in recent days."

Related article: Kremlin Confirms Chechnya's Kadyrov Met Putin Amid 'Beheading' Scandal

"Her location will not affect the coverage of the topic of human rights in Chechnya in any way," the publication said.

Milashina said in comments to the independent Dozhd broadcaster that she left Russia because "both my editor-in-chief and my rather high-ranking sources insist on it."

Novaya Gazeta and Dozhd, which said it was also threatened by Kadyrov, called on Russia's Investigative Committee to open a criminal case into incitement of hatred.

The Kremlin said Thursday that President Vladimir Putin has received written reports on the threats, but it did not elaborate further. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov has repeatedly referred to Kadyrov's threats as the Chechen leader's "personal opinion" and declined to get involved in the controversy.

Peskov also denied claims that Putin has "lost control" over Chechnya, a conservative, predominantly Muslim region that is widely believed to enjoy Moscow's financial backing in exchange for loyalty.

Kadyrov said he had met Putin in the Kremlin late on Wednesday and noted that the Russian president "always supports us on sensitive issues that require his personal involvement."

Kadyrov threatened Milashina, Kalyapin, Novaya Gazeta and Dozhd after the forced detention of a retired judge's wife in January.

The judge, Saydi Yangulbaev, fled Russia with the rest of his family after authorities forcibly detained his wife Zarema Musaeva and brought her to Chechnya. A court placed Musaeva in pre-trial detention and a board of Chechen judges stripped Yangulbaev of his immunity.

Kadyrov's close ally, federal lawmaker Adam Delimkhanov, threatened to "cut the heads off" the members of the Yangulbaev family this week.

"This is a real threat and should be perceived that way," Milashina told Dozhd.

"Delimkhanov is a very dangerous man. I don't even know who's more dangerous – Ramzan Kadyrov or Delimkhanov."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/02/04/novaya-gazeta-journalist-flees-russia-over-chechen-leaders-threats-a76255