

Friend of Abducted Chechen Woman Goes Missing After Arrest in St. Petersburg

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Lena Patyayeva. **Sota**

An activist who picketed in support of her missing Chechen friend has disappeared after being detained by police in St. Petersburg, the human rights group NC SOS [said](#) Thursday.

Lena Patyayeva staged a [protest](#) on Wednesday, criticizing what she described as authorities' sluggish investigation into the disappearance of Seda Suleimanova. Patyayeva [befriended](#) Suleimanova while the young woman was fleeing her conservative Chechen family.

Police detained Patyayeva on the Akhmat Kadyrov Bridge in southwestern St. Petersburg, citing alleged violations of Covid restrictions. She was later charged with “organizing mass protests,” an administrative offense.

NC SOS said lawyers were denied access to Patyayeva at two police stations where she was believed to be held. A court scheduled to hear her case claimed it had no record of her

whereabouts.

Related article: [My Friend Seda Suleimanova, Kidnapped by Her Chechen Family, Could Still Be Alive. Please Help Her](#)

Patyayeva has been actively searching for Suleimanova, whom some fear may have been killed in a so-called “honor killing” — a practice in which a woman is murdered by a relative, typically a man, for allegedly bringing shame to her family.

Suleimanova fled Chechnya in October 2022 after relatives threatened to kill her for refusing an arranged marriage.

In August 2023, Russian police officers and unidentified Chechen men abducted Suleimanova from her St. Petersburg apartment, where she had been living with her ethnic Russian fiancé. NC SOS said authorities later claimed she had returned to Chechnya “voluntarily.”

She has not been heard from since. The last known image of her — wearing a long dress and headscarf — was [posted](#) by Chechnya’s human rights commissioner days after her forced return.

NC SOS said federal investigators [launched](#) a criminal probe into Suleimanova’s disappearance in April 2024.

Russian human rights groups have long highlighted the widespread issue of domestic violence against women in Chechnya, a conservative, Muslim-majority republic in the North Caucasus.

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