

Friend of Abducted Chechen Woman Sentenced to Community Service

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Yelena Patyayeva. **Social media**

A St. Petersburg woman was [sentenced](#) to 20 hours of community service on Friday after staging a protest over alleged inaction by law enforcement to investigate her friend's disappearance.

Police arrested Lena Patyayeva while protesting on the Akhmat Kadyrov Bridge in southwestern St. Petersburg on Wednesday, citing alleged violations of Covid-19 restrictions.

The human rights group NC SOS said Patyayeva was denied access to her lawyer for at least 48 hours after her arrest. She was found guilty of holding an unauthorized protest and ordered to perform 20 hours of community service, the group said.

Patyayeva was protesting what she described as authorities' sluggish investigation into the disappearance of her friend Seda Suleimanova.

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

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 fiance. 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.

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.

Patyayeva said her protest and sentencing helped raise awareness of Suleimanova’s case, NC SOS reported on Telegram.

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