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Chechen Domestic Violence Survivor Briefly Detained in Kazakhstan, Activists Say

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Elza Soltaeva. **Vladislav Khorev / instagram**

Kazakh police briefly detained a 24-year-old woman reportedly fleeing domestic violence in Russia's republic of Chechnya, human rights activists said Wednesday.

Elza Soltayeva was taken to a police station in western Kazakhstan after officers demanded she speak with her relatives, according to Marem, an organization that helps women in the North Caucasus who face domestic violence.

In a video shared by Marem Wednesday afternoon, a teary-eyed Soltayeva said she had fled home on Monday due to "misunderstandings and domestic violence." The organization warned that Kazakh authorities may forcibly return the woman to her family.

However, a few hours later, Marem said Soltayeva was released from police custody and was in contact with a lawyer. According to the organization, Kazakh authorities "behaved

themselves like Russian police," adding that it was "still worried about Elza's safety."

Russia's Liza Alert volunteer organization issued a missing person report for Soltayeva on Tuesday.

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Marem founder Svetlana Anokhina said Soltayeva had previously tried to escape Chechnya but was forcibly returned to her family.

"She wasn't allowed to finish school, was married off against her will and was forbidden from working," Anokhina told Radio Free Europe/Radio Free Liberty's Russian-language service.

Russian human rights groups have long raised concerns over domestic abuse against women in the conservative North Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

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