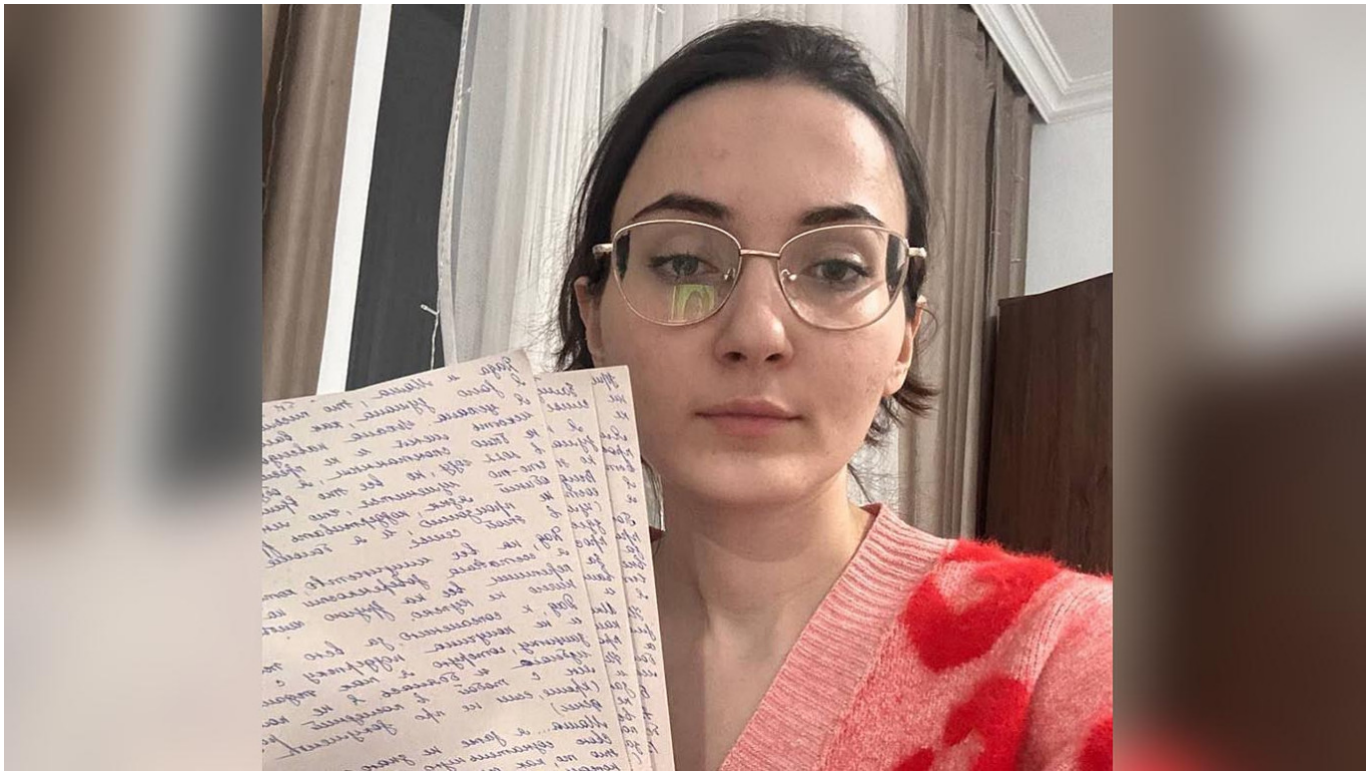
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Chechen Woman Who Fled Abusive Family Briefly Detained in Georgia, Activists Say

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Laura Avtorkhanova. **@marem_group**

Georgian police briefly detained a 24-year-old Chechen woman who had fled domestic abuse in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, human rights activists said.

Laura Avtorkhanova had been living in a shelter in Tbilisi after escaping what activists described as an abusive and controlling household. According to the rights group Marem, which supports women in the North Caucasus, Avtorkhanova had informed her family in a written note that she was leaving voluntarily and asked them not to look for her.

Despite this, her relatives filed a missing persons report with the Georgian authorities, prompting her to obtain a protective order. Marem said police assured Avtorkhanova they would notify her if any family members arrived in Georgia.

On Sunday, Marem said Avtorkhanova was "abducted" near the Tbilisi shelter by her sister

and five others, identified only as Chechens. A shelter employee who tried to intervene was allegedly assaulted.

The group of six reportedly attempted to coerce Avtorkhanova into telling police she intended to return to Russia willingly.

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Following the abduction attempt, Georgian police detained Avtorkhanova and brought her to a local station for questioning. She spent the night there, accompanied by her lawyer, and spoke by phone with her parents, who reportedly promised she would not be forcibly returned to Chechnya.

Exiled Russian broadcaster TV Rain shared footage of Avtorkhanova's supporters gathered outside the police station. In another video, she is seen signaling an "OK" gesture from a balcony.

Marem said on Monday morning that Avtorkhanova had been released and was en route to an undisclosed "safe place." The group said Georgian police plan to investigate how her relatives were able to approach her despite the protective order.

"We're grateful to the Georgian police for their willingness to investigate the situation and for not handing [Avtorkhanova] over to her relatives," Marem said in a statement. "We also thank Laura's lawyer, who arrived at night, and everyone who came to support her."

Rights groups have long raised concerns about domestic violence and coercion against women in the conservative North Caucasus republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

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