The Moscow Times
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Chechen Judge Re-Sentences Zarema Musaeva to Nearly 4 Years in Prison After Retrial

March 05, 2026



Zarema Musayeva. **Yelena Afonina / TASS**

A judge in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya has sentenced Zarema Musaeva, the jailed mother of exiled critics of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, to nearly four years in prison after being found guilty of assaulting a prison guard, the rights group Crew Against Torture said Thursday.

Musaeva, 56, was sentenced to prison for the same offense in August of last year. She had denied the accusations against her and won an appeal after the Chechen Supreme Court last month overturned the ruling for her jail sentence.

Following a two-day retrial, a judge from the Shali City Court on Wednesday found Musaeva guilty of "disrupting the work of a penal colony" and sentenced her to three years and 10 months in prison.

According to Crew Against Torture, the court struck down her lawyer's request to be granted more time to prepare questions for witnesses and Musaeva. It also rejected Musaeva's requests to postpone the trial due to her feeling unwell.

"I did not commit any crime. I am the victim here," Musaeva said in her final statement in court.

Her new sentence is one month shorter than the one the Chechen Supreme Court overturned. The state prosecutor had requested a sentence of four years and one month for Musaeva.

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Musaeva is the mother of human rights lawyer Abubakar Yangulbaev and bloggers Ibragimov and Baysangur Yangulbaev, all of whom are vocal critics of Kadyrov. She is also the wife of retired Chechen federal judge Saidi Yangulbaev.

Musaeva, who suffers from diabetes, was violently arrested in western Russia in January 2022 and taken to Chechnya, where she was sentenced to five years in prison for alleged fraud and assault of a police officer.

She was nearing the end of that first prison sentence when the new charges of assaulting a prison guard were brought against her in late 2024.

The European Court of Human Rights had ordered Russia to pay damages to Musaeva and her family over her "arbitrary" arrest, which was widely seen as retribution for the political activism of her three sons.

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