

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin  
President of the Russian Federation  
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23 Moscow, 103132  
Russian Federation

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the death threat posted on Instagram by the Head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov on 13 April. The threat is aimed at Novaya Gazeta journalist Elena Milashina and came as a reaction to her article, published in Novaya Gazeta on 12 April, regarding the authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Chechnya. Ramzan Kadyrov accused Novaya Gazeta and its journalists of being "puppets of the West" and directly appealed to the Presidential administration and the Federal Security Service (FSB) "to stop those non-humans who are writing and provoking our people." He further alluded that unless they do it, someone in Chechnya would have to commit a crime to silence the journalist.

We are further concerned that the Presidential Press Secretary dismissed those very real and serious threats as "nothing out of the ordinary" and a mere "emotional" reaction "which is understandable in such a (COVID-19 pandemic) situation." Moreover, the Prosecutor General's office ordered that Elena Milashina's article must be removed from the Novaya Gazeta website.

This is not the first time that threats and attacks against human rights defenders and journalists in Russia are being neglected and even condoned by the authorities. This is a violation of Russia's international human rights obligations to protect human rights defenders and journalists and to promote freedom of expression which leads to further impunity for these crimes.

I am calling on you as the Head of the State and guarantor of the Constitution and human rights enshrined therein:

- To publicly condemn the threats against Elena Milashina, take meaningful steps to ensure that this does

not happen again and that Elena Milashina is safe;

- To uphold the right of journalists to investigate and report on the COVID-19 pandemic and the authorities'

response in Chechnya and or other Russian regions and to protect the right to freedom of

expression and information.

Yours sincerely,