

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST THREATENED BY CHECHEN OFFICIAL

The speaker of the Chechen parliament used his Instagram account to threaten prominent journalist Grigory Shvedov on 6 January. Grigory Shvedov is the editor-in-chief of Caucasian Knot, an independent website reporting on the situation in the Caucasus.

Grigory Shvedov is a co-founder and the editor-in-chief of one of the most authoritative news resources dedicated to the Caucasus region, Caucasian Knot. This media outlet and those working for it have regularly faced threats, harassment and physical violence in connection with their work, in particular for covering human rights in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya.

On 6 January, Magomed Daudov, speaker of the Chechen parliament and one of the most powerful Chechen officials, directed thinly veiled threats at Grigory Shvedov. Magomed Daudov published a picture of a dog on his Instagram account with a knotted tongue signed “Caucasian Knot?”. In the caption he names the dog “Shved” and says that instead of “doing his useful job” he “practices in fights between dogs of other breeds” and has a “particular weakness for Caucasian sheepdogs”. He suggested that “Shved” should have his tongue cut to a normal size, and teeth removed. Magomed Daudov is a close associate of the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov. The press secretary of the Chechen administration has denied that there were any threats in the post.

Journalists who report on the situation in Chechnya are frequently threatened and some have lost their lives. Natalya Estemirova who was a frequent contributor to the Caucasian Knot website was abducted in Chechnya and killed in July 2009 and Anna Politkovskaya who reported on Chechnya was shot outside her Moscow apartment in October 2006.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, effective and impartial investigation into the threats made to Grigory Shvedov, which is a crime under Article 144 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (“obstruction of lawful professional activities of journalists”);
- Urging them to condemn in the strongest manner the threats posted by Magomed Daudov and ensure that Grigory Shvedov is protected from any possible physical attacks;
- Reminding the authorities that as a party to the European Convention on Human Rights the Russian authorities have an obligation to guarantee freedom of expression and protect journalists from threats and attacks.

Contact these two officials by 20 February, 2017:

Chairman of the Investigation Committee
Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation
Tekhnicheskii pereulok, dom 2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 966 97 76

Salutation: Dear Chairman of the Investigation Committee

Ambassador Sergey I. Kislyak
Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington DC 20007
Phone: 1 202 298 5700 | Fax: 1 202 298 5735
Email: embassy@russianembassy.org -OR- rusembusa@mid.ru
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

Here’s why it is so important to report your actions: we record the number of actions taken on each case and use that information in our advocacy. **Either email uan@aiusa.org with “UA 4/17” in the subject line or [click this link](#).**

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Magomed Daudov (also known by his wartime nickname "Lord") made similar threats in January 2016 when he posted a picture of Ramzan Kadyrov with a Caucasian shepherd dog and threatened members of the Russian opposition. Ramzan Kadyrov has also posted threats on Instagram. In February 2016 he posted a picture of the leader of the Parnas opposition party, Mikhail Kasyanov, with a sniper's target across the photograph. Grigory Shvedov has stated that he is writing to the Investigative Committee to ask for an investigation of the possible threat.

Journalists and human rights defenders who report on human rights violations in Chechnya face threats and physical violence which are rarely if ever effectively investigated, and some have lost their lives.

Natalya Estemirova who was a frequent contributor to the Caucasian Knot website was abducted in Chechnya and found dead in the neighboring Ingushetia on 15 July 2009, and Anna Politkovskaya who reported on Chechnya was shot outside her Moscow apartment on 7 October 2006. Both received threats, anonymous and from specific Chechen officials, in connection with their work, none of which were investigated.

On 9 March 2016, two members of the human rights organization Joint Mobile Group (JMG), along with their driver and six journalists from Russian, Norwegian and Swedish media, were assaulted by a group of armed masked men suspected of being local law enforcement officials while travelling from North Ossetia to Chechnya. Two hours later, the JMG's office in Ingushetia was ransacked by a mob, and on 16 March, the JMG's leader Igor Kalyapin was asked to leave a hotel in the Chechen capital Grozny by the manager because he "did not love" the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Igor Kalyapin was then punched and pelted with eggs, cakes, flour and disinfectant by an angry mob. None of these incidents was effectively investigated.

On 5 September, Zhalaudi Geriev, a contributor to Caucasian Knot known for his criticism of the leadership of Chechnya, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the Shali District Court of Chechnya for allegedly possessing 167 grams of marijuana. At his trial he withdrew his "confession" to the drugs charge, saying that three men in plain clothes had detained him on 16 April, forced him into a car and driven him to a forest outside Grozny, where he was tortured before being handed over to law enforcement officers who forced him to "confess".

According to the Committee to Project Journalists 56 journalists have been killed in Russian since 1992.

Name: Grigory Shvedov
Gender: m

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