

I am writing this to express my grave concern on the staff of Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta and journalists supporting them who have been threatened following the newspaper's publication of reports about the abduction and torture of gay men in Chechnya. . Following the threats to Novaya Gazeta, the independent radio station Ekho Moskvyy, which came out in support of the threatened staff, has also been threatened by the Mufti of Chechnya, Salakh Mezhiev.

It must be recognized as a very serious matter that public calls for retaliation made by influential people have on many occasions been followed by attacks on the individuals concerned, including killings.

Among the victims of such attacks were Novaya Gazeta's journalist Anna Politkovskaya who was murdered in 2006, as well as human rights defender Natalya Estemirova who had been a frequent contributor to Novaya Gazeta, and who was murdered in 2009.

So I urge you to address the threats made against Novaya Gazeta staff members and Ekho Moskvyy, and ensuring that they are investigated promptly, effectively and impartially in accordance with Article 144 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation regarding the "obstruction of lawful professional activities of journalists".

I also urge you to publicly condemn all threats and violence against journalists and commit to bringing those responsible to account.

Lastly, let me remind you 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.

Thank you very much for your prompt attention to this.

Sincerely yours,