

UK statement: attack on Elena Milashina and Marina Dubrovina in the Chechen Republic, Russian Federation

The United Kingdom is deeply concerned by the attack on journalist Elena Milashina and lawyer Marina Dubrovina in Grozny, in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation on 6 February.

We understand that Ms Milashina and Ms Dubrovina were attacked in a hotel in Grozny by a group of assailants, one of whom filmed the assault. Both individuals were in Grozny to attend a trial in their professional capacities. Ms Milashina has been clear that she believes the attack was as a result of her work as a journalist.

We share the concerns and condemnation expressed by the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Desir, in his statement of 7 February. We recall that in Milan in 2018, participating States agreed to “take effective measures to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists... including by ensuring that law enforcement agencies carry out swift, effective and impartial investigations into acts of violence and threats against journalists”.

We also agreed in Brussels in 2006 that states should take all necessary measures “to respect, protect and promote the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer, without discrimination and without improper interference from the authorities or the public”. We urge the Chechen and Russian authorities to carry out a prompt and thorough investigation into this attack.

We also echo the words of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, who described the attack as “the latest of a series of worrying attacks on human rights defenders and critics in the Chechen Republic.”

We are reminded of the report of December 2018 on “alleged human rights violations and impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation” by Professor Benedek, carried out under the Moscow Mechanism. That report clearly set out concerns over very serious human rights violations in the Chechen Republic. It also addressed the lack of effective remedies and the problem of impunity. As Prof Benedek wrote: “Human rights organizations and investigative media instead of being protected face various forms of harassment and attacks, which are not investigated.”

We urge the authorities in the Russian Federation to demonstrate their commitment to the OSCE human rights principles that they freely signed up to, and to hold those responsible for the attack on Ms Milashina and Ms Dubrovina to account, and to end the climate of impunity in the Chechen Republic. We would welcome an update on the investigation into the attack.