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UA – Crimea (Ukraine): Woman human rights defender and journalist Lutfiye Zudieva's house raided; later accused of violating Russia's censorship laws.

On 22 February 2024 Russian de-facto law enforcement officers in occupied Crimea raided the premises of the house of the woman human rights defender and journalist Lutfiye Zudieva in the city of Dzhankoi. After the raid, the law enforcement officials brought the woman human rights defender in for questioning at the Center for Combating Extremism in Simferopol. The authorities are accusing her of “abuse of freedom of mass information,” a crime, envisioned by Part 9, Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation. Woman human rights defender awaits the Court date to be set.

[Lutfiye Zudiyeva](#) is a prominent Crimean Tatar woman human rights defender and member of the human rights movement Crimean Solidarity which monitors politically-motivated trials in Russian-occupied Crimea and supports political prisoners and their families. She also works as a journalist for the Ukrainian media outlet Graty. In September 2022, together with the editor-in-chief of Graty, she was shortlisted for the “Honour of the Profession” Ukrainian journalism award. In 2019, she cooperated with the film crew of the documentary about the repression of the Crimean Tatars “Tomorrow Comes Yesterday” (Turkey). Lutfiye Zudiyeva also founded the child development center Elif in Dzhankoy, Crimea which organizes educational events and activities for local children.

On 22 February, 2024, at approximately 6 am local time, Russian law enforcement officers from the Center for Combating Extremism arrived at the house of the woman human rights defender Lutfiye Zudieva. The law enforcement officers refused to answer any questions and prevented her relatives and the human rights lawyers, [Emil Kurbedinov](#) and [Edem Samedlyayev](#), to get in the house to support Lutfiye Zudieva. The law enforcement officers raided the woman human rights defender's house; seized CCTV devices, phones, USB drives, and a laptop. After the raid, the law enforcement officials brought the woman human rights defender in for questioning at the Center for Combating Extremism in Simferopol.

Human rights lawyer, Emil Kurbedinov reported that the woman human rights defender is being targeted for the so-called “abuse of freedom of mass information,” a crime, envisioned by Part 1 and Part 2, Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation. If found guilty, the woman human rights defender will face a fine of up to RUR 100,000 (approximately EUR 1,000) and a confiscation of the “tool of the administrative offense.” The woman human rights defender is being targeted for her social media posts on Facebook: in 2021, when mentioning the persecution of the representatives of the “Hizb ut-Tahrir” in Crimea, she did not indicate that it is recognized as a terrorist organization in Russia; and, in 2022, when mentioning Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty media outlet, she did not indicate that it is recognized by the Russian authorities as a “foreign agent.”

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The woman human rights defender Lutfiye Zudiyeva was targeted previously by Russian de-facto authorities in Crimea for her human rights work. In July 2023, Lutfiye Zudiyeva [was arbitrarily detained and then fined](#) in Simferopol while trying to attend a trial at the Supreme Court of Russian-occupied Crimea, despite presenting her credentials as a journalist to the law enforcement officers. She was accused of being a part of this gathering “with the purpose of media coverage of it” and she subsequently “created an obstacle for pedestrian traffic,” an administrative offense envisioned by Article 20.2.2 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about targeting the woman human rights defender Lutfiye Zudieva, as the organization believes that she is being targeted for her legitimate and peaceful human rights work. Front Line Defenders continues to raise its concern with the pattern of Russian authorities using “censorship laws” to persecute human rights defenders and lawyers in Crimea.

Front Line Defenders urges the Russian de-facto authorities in Crimea to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally stop administrative harassment against human rights defender Lutfiye Zudieva;
2. Stop using the growing amount of “censorship laws” to silence peaceful and legitimate human rights work of human rights defenders in Crimea;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Crimea are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.