

06
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▲ Lvl. 1

No state
reply yet

Russian Federation n° 20/2019

Alert created on: 12 Feb 2019

Russia Investigates Reporter Svetlana Prokopyeva, Seizes Property over Allegations of "Justifying Terrorism"

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY  ▶ Detention and imprisonment of journalists

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: CPJ, Article 19, EFJ/IFJ, Index, IPI, RSF

Svetlana Prokopyeva, a Pskov-based stringer for the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Russian service and the Echo of Moscow news radio station, is being investigated for comments critical of Russian authorities in relation to a suicide bombing last year, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and the journalist, who spoke to CPJ. Russia's federal media regulator, Roskomnadzor, said those comments, made during a broadcast on the Pskov affiliate of Echo of Moscow, amounted to "justifying terrorism."

On 6 February 2019, armed special forces police raided Prokopyeva's home and seized two cell phones and three laptop computers, as well as many documents relating to her work, Prokopyeva told CPJ. She said police took her to a local station, where she was interrogated before being released. Prokopyeva's lawyer was present during the search and interrogation, according to the Russian office of Human Rights Watch. On the same day, local police conducted a "crime scene examination" of Echo of Moscow. Prokopyeva told CPJ that she was interrogated by police again on 7 February and that police forced her and her lawyer to sign an agreement stating that they would not disclose sensitive information about the investigation. Pskov police could not be reached by phone for comment.

The investigation into Prokopyeva stems from comments she made while hosting a show on the Pskov affiliate of Echo of Moscow on 7 November 2018, during which she discussed a suicide bombing attack in Arkhangelsk in October, when a 17-year-old detonated a homemade bomb inside a local Federal Security Service building. Prokopyeva said on-air that the bomber was "a teenager who grew up under Putin's rule" and that "a 'ruthless state' had raised someone who saw violence as the only path," according to a summary of her remarks by Human Rights Watch.

A transcript of the broadcast was published on Echo of Moscow's website and by local news

portal Pskov Newsfeed. In December 2018, Roskomnadzor issued a warning to both outlets and both removed the transcripts. Later that month, Roskomnadzor fined the radio station 150,000 rubles (approximately US\$2,280) and Pskov Newsfeed 200,000 rubles (approximately US\$3,040) for carrying her comments. Prokopyeva could face charges under Article 205.2(2) of the Russian criminal code, which penalizes the public justification of terrorism; if found guilty, she could face up to seven years in prison.

UPDATES

06 Jul 2020: On 6 July 2020, the Second Western District Military Court in Pskov found Svetlana Prokopyeva guilty of “justifying terrorism” and ordered her to pay a fine of 500,000 rubles (about EUR 6,100). The court did not follow the prosecutor’s request for six years of imprisonment and four years of exclusion from journalistic activity on charges of “justifying terrorism” . Prokopyeva said she will appeal the decision.

24 Jun 2020: The trial of Svetlana Prokopyeva started on 16 June 2020 the northwestern city of Pskov.

➔ **Article published by RFE/RL: "Russian Journalist Prokopyeva Rejects Charges Of 'Justifying Terrorism' "**

20 Apr 2020: In a Facebook post dated 16 March 2020, Svetlana Prokopyeva revealed that she had been officially indicted on extremism charges, for which she faces seven years in prison.

➔ **Facebook post by Svetlana Prokopyeva**

23 Sep 2019: On 20 September 2019, journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva was formally charged with publicly justifying terrorism. The journalist was also asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement and a written undertaking not to leave the Pskov region.

16 Aug 2019: On 13 August 2019, Svetlana Prokopyeva filed a complaint with the ECHR. Prokopyeva complained on grounds of the search in her apartment and seizure of equipment and documents, which endangered the confidentiality of the sources of information.

12 Jul 2019: On 4 July 2019 , Svetlana Prokopyeva was placed on the Rosfinmonitoring's list (Federal Financial Monitoring Service of the Russian Federation) and her accounts were blocked.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



- ➔ **Russian Union of Journalists statement: "Fined Half-a-Million for Working as a Journalist"**
- ➔ **RSF statement: "Russian radio journalist convicted of "justifying terrorism" "**
- ➔ **EFJ-JMWU joint statement: "Russian journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva wrongly charged with justifying terrorism"**
- ➔ **EFJ statement: "Labelled as "terrorist", Russian journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva had her bank accounts blocked"**
- ➔ **Russian Union of Journalists statement: Владимир Соловьёв о ситуации с журналисткой радиостанции "Эхо Москвы в Пскове"**
- ➔ **CPJ interview with Prokopyeva on 30 April 2020: "Russian journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva says charges against her are 'an act of intimidation'"**
- ➔ **CPJ Alert : "Russian journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva facing trial over terrorism commentary"**
- ➔ **RSF statement: "Russian radio journalist could get seven years for commentary"**
- ➔ **RSF statement: "Russian journalist put on "terrorist" list over radio commentary"**

FOLLOW-UPS ▼



06 Jul 2020 | According to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, "the verdict against journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva reflect[s] once again the urgency to overhaul legislation governing freedom of assembly and of expression, as well as anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation in the Russian Federation".

➔ **Statement by Dunja Mijatović**



06 Jul 2020 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative Harlem Désir dismayed by court verdict against journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva in Russia

➔ **Statement by Harlem Désir**



07 Oct 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative reiterates his call for dropping criminal charges against journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva in the Russian Federation.

➔ **Statement by Harlem Désir**



23 Jul 2019 | Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights asks High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation to continue to

accord close attention to this case with a view to ensuring full respect of Ms Prokopyeva's rights and freedoms

➔ **Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights letter to Tatiana Moskalkova, High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation**



19 Feb 2019 | On 19 February 2019, CoE Human Rights Commissioner published a letter in which she asks the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, Tatiana Moskalkova, to accord close attention to the case of Svetlana Prokopyeva, stressing that misuse of anti-terrorism legislation limits media freedom and freedom of expression.

➔ **Statement by Dunja Mijatović**



13 Feb 2019 | OSCE Media Freedom Representative calls for dropping of criminal charges against Radio Ekho Moskvyy journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva in Russia.

➔ **Statement by Harlem Désir**