

**Van:** Tanya Lokshina, Human Rights Watch <news@hrw.org>  
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**Onderwerp:** I have you at my back

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**Because of your support,  
we're not going anywhere.**

Dear Supporter,

I was seven months pregnant when the threats began.

I was planning one last trip from Moscow to Russia's Northern Caucasus, just to check in with local activists before my maternity leave, when I received the first text message on my cell phone.

*If I went to the Caucasus, the anonymous text warned me, they would make sure my baby did not make it.*

Over the next few days the threats increased and grew more graphic. Texts came from new unknown numbers several times a day. When I called back, they were disconnected.

Whoever was sending the texts knew all sorts of things about me—my unlisted Moscow address, my husband's upcoming flight information, intimate details of my pregnancy that not one of my friends knew. This was information that could only have been collected through close surveillance by government officials.

On the day of my husband's flight, I got a text the minute he left. *You are alone now, they wrote, just you and your unborn child, and we will be coming after you.*

There was a time when Moscow felt like a secure place. My work in distant conflict zones had always been accompanied by risk, but Moscow was my home—a safe haven for me to work. In recent years however, especially since Vladimir Putin's return to office, the safety of human rights activists across Russia has been under serious threat. More and more activists have chosen to leave the country—a very difficult choice. Several have faced the consequences of staying, and many have been killed.

I am lucky. I have the global staff of Human Rights Watch and all of our supporters—all of you—at my back.

When my life was threatened, I knew the only way to continue working was to make this public. Human Rights Watch immediately called a press conference in Moscow. When officials threaten a human rights worker, it is because they don't want any witnesses to the abuses they intend to commit.

They wanted to silence us and make us give up on our Russia work. But we made it clear: **Human Rights Watch will continue to bear witness. We're not going anywhere.**

With the support of people like you, we are able to work in places where abuse is taking root, and rein in the repression of abusive governments. Because of you, we are able to aid local activists on the ground—courageous people who rely on us. Who rely on you.

People have sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of human rights work in Russia and around the world.

We must continue their legacy. We owe them that.

And because of you and your continued support, I can.

Thank you,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'R' followed by a horizontal line.

Tanya Lokshina

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