

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 15, 2018

The Honorable António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We write with great concern regarding three Russian journalists—Orkhan Dzhemal, Kirill Radchenko, and Alexander Rastorguyev—who were killed in an ambush by unknown assailants in the Central African Republic on July 31. They were reportedly in the country investigating the activities of Wagner, a private Russian mercenary group that has been deployed in Syria and Ukraine and that is reported to be linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a catering magnate close to Vladimir Putin.

The journalists were working on a documentary about Wagner for the Investigations Management Center, an independent media project supported by Mikhail Khodorkovsky, an exiled opponent of Putin. While the circumstances of the ambush are still unclear, Russian state media have been quick to blame the killings on a “robbery.”

The murders of journalists come amid increased Russian involvement in the Central African Republic. With UN approval, the Russian Federation has delivered arms and ammunition and provided instructors for the CAR military. According to a recent report by the UN Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic to the UN Security Council, Russian arms shipments have “led to waves of rearmament” by various factions in the country. Earlier this year, Russia’s Wagner group was deployed to the Central African Republic to provide a security detail for President Faustin-Archange Touadéra.

According to the editor-in-chief of the Investigations Management Center, Andrei Konyakhin, the journalists coordinated their movements with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and the UN Mission recommended their driver (who witnessed and survived the ambush).

We respectfully ask you to engage the relevant UN mechanisms to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the circumstances of the murder of Orkhan Dzhemal, Kirill Radchenko, and Alexander Rastorguyev, and to ensure full cooperation by the governments of the Central African Republic and the Russian Federation.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator