

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Russian Federation, Chechen Republic: Alleged secret detentions in Tsenterei must be investigated**

Amnesty International has today written to the Russian authorities raising concerns about the alleged unlawful detention of Makhmadsalors Masaev for four months at a base run by then-Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov in Tsenterei, Chechen Republic, in 2006, as well as more recent reports of other arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances. The organization has urged the Russian authorities to ensure investigations into all such allegations take place promptly, thoroughly, independently and impartially; the methods and findings of the investigations should be made public; all those identified as being reasonably suspected of a crime in relation to the allegations should be prosecuted in proceedings that meet international standards of fair trial; and that the reported existence of an unofficial detention facility at Tsenterei should be fully investigated.

Makhmadsalors Delilovich Masaev (born 1966) was reportedly abducted from Gudermes central mosque at 2pm on 28 September 2006 and detained in an unofficial detention facility until 21 January 2007, when he was released by his captors. According to the information available, during this time Makhmadsalors Masaev was held in incommunicado detention at an unofficial detention facility at Tsenterei.

On 10 July 2008 the independent newspaper, *Novaia Gazeta*, published an interview with Makhmadsalors Masaev, detailing his experiences. These include being held with other detainees day and night for about a month in a bus parked on the territory of a military base, thought to be Tsenterei, beating treated roughly and humiliated, and being threatened with being shot. After the first month, when the weather became extremely cold, Makhmadsalors Masaev was moved to what he describes as a prison on the base, where others were being held. He states that during this time he saw the then-Prime Minister Kadyrov on a few occasions. On one occasion in December 2006 Prime Minister Kadyrov spoke to him in person, refusing to release him; on a subsequent occasion on 21 January 2007, Prime Minister Kadyrov invited him to drink tea with him, before ordering his release.

We understand that a criminal investigation has been opened into the case and that Makhmadsalors Masaev was granted victim status on 18 March 2008 by an investigator at the Gudermes interdistrict investigation department of the Investigative Committee under the Prosecutor's Office of the Chechen Republic. The Prosecutor's Office has established that on 28 September Makhmadsalors Masaev was abducted from the Gudermes central mosque and taken to an unknown destination, from where he was released on 21 January 2007, but has not formally established who the perpetrators were.

Reportedly, he had -- a day or two beforehand -- been detained at the Gudermes District Department for Internal Affairs (ROVD) before being released. He was allegedly ill-treated while in detention.

In today's letter, Amnesty International also expressed concern to the Office of the Prosecutor General about two other cases of feared arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, those of Umar Bisaev and Isa Khalitov. Umar Bisaev was reportedly stopped when driving his vehicle in the Chechen capital Grozny by armed men wearing camouflage on 23 November 2007. Allegedly, the armed men were from the special purpose police division – 2 (known by its Russian acronym PMSN-2) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Chechen Republic, based in the Staropromyslovskii district of Grozny. Umar Bisaev was put into one of the two cars, a black VAZ-21112, registration number B 518 БЕ 95, and was driven away, towards the centre of Grozny. His own Gazel was also driven away by the armed men. To this day, Umar Bisaev's family do not know what then happened to him and are unaware of his fate and whereabouts.

Isa Khalitov was reportedly detained by armed men in camouflage near the village of Goragorsk in the Chechen Republic at about 10pm on 27 May 2008. He has not been seen since. Isa Khalitov is believed to have been detained by police from the Operational/Search Bureau No. 2 of the Main Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation responsible for the Southern Federal Region (ORB-2), based in the Chechen capital Grozny.

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