

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: EUR 46/037/2004 (Public)

News Service No: 159

22 June 2004

Russian Federation: Coordinated attacks in Ingushetia – life far from normal

Yesterday's coordinated violent attacks reportedly by armed Chechen fighters in Ingushetia - the largest to have taken place there to date - have heightened Amnesty International's concerns that the disregard for human rights which characterize the continuing conflict in the Chechen Republic are spilling over to the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia. According to preliminary reports the attacks have left some 46 people dead, including 18 law-enforcement officials and 28 civilians, including the acting Ingush Interior Minister Abukar Kostoiev. Some reports have indicated that some 60 people were wounded.

At around 11.00pm on 21 June, up to 200 Chechen fighters are reported to have used automatic weapons and rocket propelled grenades to target various police and government targets in Ingushetia in coordinated attacks. The main Ministry of Interior building in Nazran, police stations in Nazran and Karabulak, an OMON unit (riot police) and various checkpoints in Karabulak and the village of Sleptovskaia were reportedly among the targets. The acting Interior Minister of Ingushetia - Abukar Kostoiev - was reportedly killed, along with the Procurator of Nazran, another senior procuracy official and a senior police chief. According to an Ingush security services official, Chechen fighters also shot at ambulances and civilian vehicles, resulting in the killing of a pregnant Ingush woman.

Amnesty International reiterates its call on all sides to the ongoing conflict to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. International humanitarian law absolutely prohibits direct attacks on civilians; attacks that do not attempt to distinguish between military targets and civilians or civilian objects and attacks that, although aimed at a legitimate military target, have a disproportionate impact on civilians or civilian objects. Reprisals against civilians or civilian objects are also prohibited. The organization calls for prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law and for perpetrators to be brought to justice in the course of proceedings which meet international fair trial standards.

As Amnesty International highlights in its report entitled *"Russian Federation: Chechen Republic - 'Normalization' in whose eyes?"*, to be launched tomorrow in both Strasbourg, France, where the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is currently meeting, and in Moscow, the situation in the Chechen Republic has far from "normalized". Abuses which have so far characterized the ongoing conflict in Chechnya are now occurring with alarming regularity in neighbouring Ingushetia. The organization also calls on the international community to ensure that the conflict in and around Chechnya is placed higher on the international agenda. Based on its experience in other parts of the world, Amnesty International considers that a lasting resolution of the conflict must be based on measures that ensure respect and protection of the human rights of all persons in the region without discrimination.

The victims of yesterday's attacks and the other victims of the conflict, that has raged over the last five years, deserve no less.