

URGENT ACTION

HOMOPHOBIC CRACKDOWN IN CHECHNYA RESUMES

The Chechen authorities have unleashed a new wave of attacks on people believed to be gay or lesbian. At least 40 individuals have been arbitrarily detained and tortured in Chechnya, a republic in the south of Russia. At least two people are reported to have been tortured to death.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USING THIS MODEL LETTER

Vladimir Putin

President of the Russian Federation

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Dear President,

I am deeply concerned about the reports of grave human rights violations being carried out by the authorities in Chechnya, who since the end of December 2018 have launched a new wave of homophobic attacks in Chechnya. Around 40 people believed to be gay or lesbian have been reportedly detained in a government building in the city of Argun, where they have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. At least two individuals are reported to have died after being tortured, but the actual number of victims may be higher. The authorities are also said to be destroying the individuals' passports, making it difficult for them to flee Chechnya in the future. The Russian authorities' failure to investigate the 2017 attacks - which involved the abduction and killing of 100 gay men and women - and for which no one has yet been held accountable, has enabled this homophobic crackdown to resume. The Russian Federation has an obligation under international human rights law to prohibit discrimination and to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

I urge you to carry out a prompt, effective and thorough investigation into the reports of homophobic detention, torture and killings in Chechnya and to ensure that anyone found guilty or complicit in such crimes is brought to justice. I further urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of those who may be at risk in Chechnya because of their real or perceived sexual orientation and condemn in the strongest terms possible any homophobic comments made by officials against individuals due to their real or perceived sexual orientation.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 April 2017, the Russian independent daily newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, reported that over a hundred men believed to be gay had been abducted in Chechnya as part of a coordinated campaign by the local authorities. The men were reportedly tortured and otherwise ill-treated and forced to disclose other LGBTI individuals known to them. Novaya Gazeta claimed to have verified information about at least three men who had been killed by their captors, but its sources claimed that there had been many more killings. Officials in Chechnya and Moscow continuously denied these allegations and the preliminary criminal investigation into allegations of Maxim Lapunov, the only victim who came forward, was closed.

On 30 August 2018, 15 members of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) enacted the Vienna Mechanism, seeking truth about and justice for those grave human rights violations in Chechnya and demanding effective investigations into, among others, violations committed against actual or perceived LGBTI persons which occurred in 2017. After not having received a sufficient reply from the Russian Federation, on 1 November 2018, 16 participating States of the OSCE enacted the Moscow Mechanism and tasked Professor Wolfgang Benedek to write a report on the alleged human rights violations and impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. The report, issued on 20 December 2018, confirmed the allegations of serious human rights violations in Chechnya- in particular allegations of harassment and persecution, arbitrary arrests or detention, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions of people, which include but are not limited to, LGBTI persons, human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media and civil society organisations. The report also noted that there is a climate of impunity in Chechnya, which is detrimental to any accountability for human rights violations. The report made a number of recommendations to the Russian Federation including: opening an inquiry into the allegations; establishing a special investigative committee to conduct effective; impartial and transparent investigation of the allegations; and opening of a criminal investigation into violations against Maxim Lapunov. Eight days after the report was issued, the authorities resumed their persecution of actual or perceived LGBTI people in Chechnya.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: RUSSIAN, ENGLISH

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 May 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.