

URGENT ACTION

LAWYER THREATENED IN NORTH CAUCASUS

Criminal defence lawyer Magamed Abubakarov has been receiving text messages containing death threats from an unfamiliar phone number. He was repeatedly threatened before in connection with his professional activities, and was badly injured in December 2011 in a suspicious car accident involving police.

Magamed Abubakarov is a criminal defence lawyer (*advokat*) from Chechnya, currently working in Kabardino-Balkaria, another republic in Russia's North Caucasus. He is widely known for his brave work on some of the most sensitive cases in the North Caucasus many of which involved strong allegations of abductions, torture and fabrication of criminal charges by law enforcement officials, as well as for his media interviews on the subject.

Starting from 6 February 2013, Magamed Abubakarov has been receiving threatening messages from a mobile number which he did not recognize. The sender was demanding to know where Magamed Abubakarov was and telling him he would not be able to hide. Magamed tried to call back and texted the sender offering to meet, but his calls and messages were ignored. After Magamed Abubakarov reported the threats, and the phone number from which they came, to the police, he received a message which, in highly abusive language, stated: "the time to ... [talk] is over. ... [you will be talking] in a mortuary".

Police have failed to respond promptly to Magamed Abubakarov's complaints, and have still not questioned him about these threats.

Please write immediately in Russian or your own language:

- Urging the Russian authorities to investigate Magamed Abubakarov's complaints about the anonymous threats he has been receiving, and identify and prosecute the person(s) behind them;
- Urging them to ensure that criminal defence lawyers in the North Caucasus are able to discharge their functions without intimidation, hindrance and harassment, including from members of law enforcement agencies.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MARCH 2013 TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs
Sergei Valentinovich Vasilyev
Minister of Internal Affairs of the
Kabardino-Balkaria Republic
ul. Kuliev, 10a
360000 g. Nalchik
Kabardino-Balkaria
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 8662 49 52 00
Email: mvd_kbr@mail.ru
Salutation: Dear Minister

Head of the Directorate of the Federal
Security Service
Maj.-Gen. Sergei Leonidovich Kumenniy
Head of the Directorate of the Federal
Security Service for Kabardino-Balkaria
ul. Lenina, 4
360000 g. Nalchik
Kabardino-Balkaria
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 8662 48 17 090
Email: kbr@fsb.ru
**Salutation: Dear Major-General
Kumenniy**

Prosecutor General of the Russian
Federation
Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika
Prosecutor General of the Russian
Federation
Prosecutor General's Office
ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a
125993 Moscow GSP- 3
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 987 58 41
+7 495 692 17 25
Email: prgenproc@gov.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Magamed Abubakarov has worked with several human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, and one of his clients, Rasul Kudaev, a former Guantanamo prisoner, has been the subject of several of Amnesty International's Urgent Actions as a victim of torture and other ill-treatment at the hands of investigation officials and penitentiary administration. Magamed Abubakarov first received threats in connection with his professional activities in 2007, exactly when he started working on Rasul Kudaev's case. Since then, threats have been regular. On the night of 15 December 2011, Magamed Abubakarov was driving alone in a car when he was stopped by armed masked police in a quiet street in Nalchik. After showing his papers, Magamed was told to open the car boot and as soon as he did so another car drove into him from behind at full speed. He was badly injured, with one of his legs crushed, and spent several months recovering in hospital. Magamed Abubakarov initially thought this was an accident although he could not rule out ill intention. His suspicions grew after the driver responsible for the accident stopped answering his calls, while the police did nothing to establish his whereabouts or investigate the incident, and after Magamed was not given a chance to see police's case file on this incident.

On 6 June 2012, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action in support of Rustam Matsev (EUR 46/021/2012), another lawyer from Nalchik who works closely with Magamed Abubakarov. Rustam Matsev reported that he had received a death threat from a senior police official who was demanding that the lawyer's client withdrew his complaint about abduction and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials. The authorities refused to open criminal investigation into Rustam Matsev's complaint.

The North Caucasus is a region in the Russian Federation characterized by insecurity and volatility perpetrated by armed groups who launch attacks against security forces, local officials and civilians. The authorities' response to this threat is focused on security operations and heavy-handed law enforcement, which are often marred by alleged human rights violations, such as extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, secret detention and torture and other ill-treatment. (For details, see report *Russian Federation: The circle of injustice: Security operations and human rights violations in Ingushetia* <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/012/2012/en>).

Criminal defence lawyers in the North Caucasus who work on cases of individuals suspected of membership of armed groups – those particularly vulnerable to the risk of the above-mentioned human rights violations – are often themselves exposed to threats and human rights violations by law enforcement officials who often perceive them as an obstacle in their work which prevents them from fulfilling their functions. One lawyer in Dagestan, Omar Saidmagomedov, was killed by members of security forces in the streets of Makhachkala; the authorities reported his killing as a security operation but the lawyer's colleagues allege that he was extrajudicially executed in connection with his work, and have raised concern that the authorities are refusing to investigate these allegations.

Name: Magamed Abubakarov
Gender m/f: male

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