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Chechnya: Rape and torture of children in Chernokozovo "filtration camp"

*"The soldiers often told us, 'even if you get out of here alive, you will certainly be handicapped'."
"Musa", a survivor of the Chernokozovo "filtration camp"*

Amnesty International has received disturbing testimony from a survivor of the Chernokozovo "filtration camp" that detainees, including women and children, have been raped and subjected to brutal torture.

Amnesty International's field researcher interviewed in Ingushetia "Musa"*, a 21-year-old man, who was held in the Chernokozovo camp between 16 January and 5 February. He was detained in the village of Znamenskiy, while fleeing the shelling of Grozny by bus with his mother and brother. Musa was detained with 10 other men, including two teenage boys.

"Musa" was severely beaten and tortured several times each day during his detention. On 18 January, he was forced to walk between a "human corridor" of 20-25 masked men armed with clubs and hammers, who beat him and the other detainees as they passed. "Musa" was hit on his back with a hammer which has left him with a fractured spine.

"Musa" witnessed a 14-year-old girl being raped by a dozen prison guards in the corridor outside the cells in which he and other detainees were held. The girl had come to visit her detained mother and for the price of 5,000 Rubles she was permitted a five-minute meeting. Her five-minute meeting became a four-day ordeal during which she was locked in a cell, beaten and repeatedly raped by guards.

"Musa" also told Amnesty International about a 16-year-old boy called Albert, originally from the village of Davydenko, who was brought to his cell after being gang-raped and severely beaten by prison guards. One of his ears had been cut off and the guards referred to him by the female name of "Maria". "Musa" believes that up to 10 men were raped in the camp during his 21-day detention.

"Musa" shared a cell for one week with Andrey Babitsky, the Radio Liberty journalist. Among his other cell mates during his 21-day detention, were a man whose hands had been severely burnt by prison guards with cigarette lighters and a 17-year-old youth whose teeth had been sawn off with a metal file and whose lips were shredded, leaving him unable to eat, drink or speak. "Musa" estimated that 10-15 new detainees were brought to the camp each day. Among those he saw were 13-14 year-old girls.

His freedom was eventually secured on 5 February by his mother who paid 4,000 Rubles and bought the release of two Russian prisoners of war from Chechen fighters, as demanded by the camp authorities. "Musa" and his mother escaped to Ingushetia and are currently in hiding fearing for their safety after he was identified following an interview he gave about his ordeal to the national NTV channel. According to medical doctors who examined "Musa" after his release, without urgent medical treatment he risks being paralysed for life.

"Musa's' shocking ordeal is consistent with other reports that have emerged from the Russian "filtration camps", despite continual denials by the Russian government to the

international community and the media that torture and rape are prevalent in these camps," Amnesty International said.

"The Russian government must take immediate measures to end such appalling human rights violations and allow medical personnel and the International Committee of the Red Cross immediate and unhindered access to the detainees. " Amnesty International stressed.

ENDS.../

*"Musa" is not his real name. It has been changed for his own security.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on + 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>