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## **Russian Federation: Chechens targeted in Moscow**

While Chechen civilians continue to suffer indiscriminate or direct attacks by Russian forces in Chechnya, they are also being targeted on the streets and in police stations in Moscow, Amnesty International said today in a new report on the persecution of Chechens in Moscow.

“Not only are Chechen people victims of a military offensive, they are also targets of a massive intimidation campaign against ethnic minorities in Moscow,” Amnesty International said.

Since the bombing of residential buildings in Moscow last September, the Russian authorities have embarked on an anti-terror campaign code-named ‘Operation Whirlwind’. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombs which killed nearly 300 people, the Mayor of Moscow has publicly stated that he believes Islamic groups from Chechnya were responsible.

Non-Muscovites are being required to register or re-register with the authorities. Up to 20,000 people have been rounded up by the Moscow police and 10,000 have been expelled from Moscow after being refused a permit to reside in the city.

Over the past three months Amnesty International has collected testimonies from Chechens and other ethnic minorities in Moscow who have been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in custody, and forcible expulsion. Many alleged that they have had drugs and weapons planted on them which were used as the basis for criminal charges.

Chechen engineer Badruduy Eskiev was taken by Moscow police on 15 September from his apartment, allegedly beaten and later arrested. The police said that he was apprehended on the street at 2am in possession of drugs. However Badruduy’s family witnessed police finding nothing when they emptied his pockets at 5am in the apartment. Badruduy’s Russian wife was told by police that “the only good Chechen is a dead Chechen”.

Many Chechens have sewn their pockets up in order to prevent anything being planted on them if stopped by police. One young Chechen exclaimed: “This is how we live. Thanks to the Department on Fighting Organized Crime. First we were bandits, then became terrorists, and now we are becoming seamstresses.”

Malika Takayeva and her brother had been living in Moscow since 1995. Their residency permits had run out when they were arrested on 13 September and sentenced to five days imprisonment on a charge of ‘petty hooliganism’. They were reportedly threatened with being put into a cellar “to rot” and told their sister would be killed. Upon being released they were instructed to remove their belongings from their home within 24 hours. A police officer allegedly told them that Chechens should not just be expelled but destroyed.

Amnesty International is urging the government to stop the campaign of intimidation against ethnic Chechens and other people from the Caucasus who reside in Moscow and other cities, and to investigate reports of human rights violations.

“The situation for Chechens is very grim wherever they turn. The Russian authorities have the right to investigate and bring to justice individuals suspected of being responsible for terrorist activities but the government does not have the right to persecute a whole ethnic group.”

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