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News Flash

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Russian Federation: Amnesty International condemns hostage taking

Moscow- Amnesty International today strongly condemned the actions of an armed group, described as Chechen fighters, who have taken hostage hundreds of people in a Moscow theatre. According to some reports, members of the group have threatened to kill hostages if their demands – currently said to be for Russian troops to withdraw from the Chechen Republic – are not met.

“Hostage-taking is simply unacceptable in any circumstances. People’s lives are put at risk and their rights simply ignored. We are calling on those responsible to release the hostages immediately, unconditionally, and unharmed.” Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said.

While recognizing the right, and indeed the duty of states to protect their citizens, Amnesty International is also calling on the Russian authorities to ensure that any use of force and firearms is fully consistent with international standards.

Background

The conflict in Chechnya has been characterized by serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Amnesty International has actively researched numerous, consistent and credible reports that Russian forces have been responsible for widespread human rights violations such as ‘disappearances’, extrajudicial executions and torture, including rape.

Chechen forces are also reported to have violated international humanitarian law. Chechen fighters who have been operating in and around populated areas have reportedly failed to take measures to protect civilians. They are also said to have targeted civilian members of the pro-Moscow administration in attacks that have resulted in dozens of fatalities, and carried out other kidnappings and hostage taking of civilians.

Amnesty International condemns hostage taking, which is a violation of the Geneva Conventions.

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