

News Service: 077/00
25 April 2000
AI Index: EUR 46/30/00

UN Commission's resolution on Chechnya: Another missed opportunity to guarantee accountability and justice

The UN Commission on Human Rights today passed a resolution which failed to call for an international investigation.

“This simply is not enough”, Amnesty International said today. “Only an international investigation can bring perpetrators to account and ensure justice for the victims.”

Amnesty International welcomes the request to the relevant UN Special Rapporteurs to visit Chechnya and neighbouring republics, nevertheless such visits are no substitute for a sustained international investigation.

Although the resolution expresses concern about the human rights abuses that have taken place in the context of the armed conflict in Chechnya, the Russian authorities pre-empted the strike by announcing the formation of a national commission of enquiry on 17 April.

“We do not believe that the national commission of enquiry will be enough to ensure that the perpetrators of human rights abuses are brought to justice,” Amnesty International said today.

The recently established national commission is made up of high-profile public figures, and does not include medical and forensic experts. There is a worrying lack of credibility and clarity surrounding the mandate of the national commission of enquiry, and so far, it has taken no real action to investigate the reports of human rights abuses.

“The composition and terms of reference of the newly-created national commission seem to indicate that it is more likely to be a timely public relations exercise by the Russian authorities, rather than a credible investigatory body,” Amnesty International said.

Sergey Yastrzhembsky, Russian presidential spokesperson, reportedly announced on 25 April that the Russian authorities had initiated 427 cases concerning crimes committed by Russian soldiers since the start of the armed conflict. The preliminary investigations into 74 criminal cases have reportedly been completed and sent to a military court, and 36 soldiers have reportedly been convicted. Only 29 investigations are reported to have been opened into allegations of human rights violations. However, Amnesty International is not aware of any of the specific charges in these 29 cases, nor is the organization aware that any of the cases into crimes against civilians have reached court.

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