

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information (5) on UA 446/94 (EUR 46/03/94, 15 December 1994) and follow-ups (EUR 46/01/95, 4 January 1995, EUR 46/02/95, 25 January, EUR 46/03/95, 1 February, EUR 46/06/95, 13 March) - Appeal for respect of humanitarian law

RUSSIA Introduction of death penalty for "illegal armed formations" moves a step closer

On 10 March 1995, it was reported that the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, had overridden a resolution by the Federation Council, the upper house, rejecting the vote on 20 January by the State Duma to introduce a new article into the Criminal Code punishing "the organization of, or participation in, illegal armed formations". The new Article 77-2 carries a sentence of up to eight years' imprisonment for such action, and a possible death sentence if this is accompanied by "mass violence, the death of people or other serious damage". Those fighting Russian troops introduced into the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic in December 1994 are frequently referred to by government sources as "illegal armed formations".

The State Duma exercised its authority to overrule the Federation Council by a two-thirds majority vote. It has been reported that the proposed Criminal Code amendment introducing Article 77-2 will now go to President Yeltsin to be signed into law. According to the Constitution, the President has 14 days in which to either sign a law submitted to him or return it to the State Duma and the Federation Council for further examination.

Amnesty International takes no position on territorial disputes. The organization's concern about this issue stems from its opposition to the death penalty in all cases, without reservation, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Amnesty International is urging President Yeltsin to ensure that the use of the death penalty in Russia is not extended to this or any other laws.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that all appropriate steps be taken to ensure that the use of the death penalty is not extended to the new law on "illegal armed formations", or to any other law, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life.

APPEALS TO:

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section.

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
g. Moskva
Kreml

Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii YELTSINU B.N.

Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Yeltsinu

Faxes: +7 095 206 51 73

Salutation: Dear President

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Ivan Petrovich Rybkin
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
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Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, Vladimir
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Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Vladimirovich Kozyrev
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Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergey Adamovich Kovalyov
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and to diplomatic representatives of Russia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 April 1995.