

URGENT ACTION

CHECHEN AUTHORITIES EVICT FAMILIES IN GROZNY

Dozens of families have been forcibly evicted from “temporary” accommodation by authorities in the Chechen capital Grozny in Russia. More are facing imminent eviction.

On 14 January, armed camouflaged men came into a family hostel (*obschezhitie*) housing 100 families, and told residents they had to move out reportedly citing presidential orders. Since then, families in at least six other hostels in the same city have been told to leave. Most were told they had 48 hours to vacate their rooms, and no alternative accommodation was offered. The families are being forced out of the family hostels in order to make room for other families who are themselves being evicted from flats in the town of Argun.

The hostels were among the first buildings restored in Grozny after the two Chechen wars of the 1990s-2000s. They were intended as temporary accommodation for internally displaced people who had lost their properties however many families are still living there because of a lack of alternative accommodation. Most families are still registered (which is a legal requirement) at their previous addresses, and the authorities are reportedly using this as a pretext to evict them and tell them to go “back where they came from.” In a recent a TV interview Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-appointed Chechen President, publicly criticized the families resisting eviction for being uncooperative and “ungrateful.”

According to the Russian human rights NGO Memorial, 62 families were evicted from family hostels between 14 and 21 January, many with children and several with adult male members missing following the war. Many families are surviving on less than US\$170 a month and some on as little as US\$30. Dozens more families are at risk of immediate eviction, and many live in fear that they will be targeted next.

While such evictions contradict Russian and international law, most evictees are too afraid to challenge the Chechen authorities and file official complaints. The few who have are likely to be put under pressure by the authorities to withdraw them. Some of those evicted have been allegedly forced by armed law enforcement officials to sign statements stating that they were moving out voluntarily.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian or your own language:

- Urging authorities to halt any further evictions of people from *obschezhities* in Grozny until such time as adequate alternative accommodation can be provided;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that no one is being evicted without due process, adequate notice, consultation and ensuring that all of those affected have access to adequate alternative accommodation;
- Stressing UN Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons that such persons have the right to an adequate standard of living, including basic shelter and housing, and ensure protection against arbitrary displacement.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 MARCH 2011 TO:

President of the Russian Federation

Dmitry A. Medvedev
Ul. Ilyinka, 23
Moscow 103132
Russian Federation
Fax: +7495 9102134 (information office)
Email: <http://eng.letters.kremlin.ru/send>

Prime Minister of the Russian

Federation
Vladimir V. Putin
Krasnopresnenskaia nab. d.2, str. 2
103274 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7495 6055243

And copies to:

President of the Republic of Chechnya
Ramzan Kadyrov
Presidential Administration
Ulitsa Garazhnaya, 10
Grozny 8-8712
Republic of Chechnya
Fax: +78712 224553
Email:
<http://www.chechnya.gov.ru/page.php?r=118>

Please send faxes during office hours (GMT+4). If a person answers, clearly say FAX. Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Chechen Republic in the Russian Federation has been the site of two military conflicts since 1994, during which federal forces were deployed to counter a Chechen independence movement which had arisen since the collapse of the Soviet Union. During these, the capital Grozny was destroyed almost completely, and a number of other towns across the region suffered severe damage. Many lost their homes and other possessions, thousands became internally displaced persons (IDPs), and several years after the full-scale military fighting in the region came to an end, some have still haven't been able to return. Amnesty International has been told that many people who received compensation for their lost homes have been forced to give away up to half of it in bribes, and many families have not received any compensation at all.

Local authorities across the North Caucasus have been pursuing the policy of forcing IDPs to return to their original place of residence, sometimes without due consideration for people's ongoing security, economic and other concerns. Thus, in April 2006, the then Prime Minister of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov demanded that the temporary accommodation centres for internally displaced people in Chechnya be closed, reportedly calling them "a nest of criminality, drug addiction and prostitution". Since then, many of the centres have been closed or renamed as hostels and it is feared that all remaining centres will shortly be closed. Amnesty International has already raised concern about forced evictions of IDPs.

According to Memorial, the current episode of forcible evictions is linked to a major reconstruction and development project in the town of Argun which began on 21 January, during which a number of private houses have been demolished, with some owners being relocated to state-owned blocks of flats. Residents of these flats have been reportedly forced to move to family hostels in Grozny whose residents in turn are now targeted for forcible evictions with no alternative residence offered. They are told to return to villages where they are officially registered in spite of the fact that their homes there remain destroyed. Local administrations from these villages have been reportedly told to find them temporary accommodation but have been offered no help from the government in Grozny. Evicted families are seeking temporary refuge with their friends and relatives, but several are reported to have no-where to go to and having their whole possessions left under the open sky in the street, in severe Chechen winter conditions.

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