

URGENT ACTION

EVICTION OF FAMILIES IN CHECHNYA CONTINUES

Forcible eviction of families from “temporary” accommodation in the Chechen capital Grozny in Russia has continued. The Prosecutor’s Office has found no violations of the right to housing.

Since mid-January, dozens of families living in at least seven family hostels (*obshchezhitie*) in Grozny have received eviction notices from the local authorities, who have not offered alternative accommodation. According to the Russian human rights NGO Memorial, between 14 and 21 January, 62 families were evicted from family hostels, and forcible evictions have continued since.

Memorial has petitioned the Prosecutor’s Office of the Chechen Republic, asking them to stop evicting the residents. They received an official reply letter dated 21 February stating that residents of the hostel on Mayakovskogo Street, 119, in Grozny “voluntarily” vacated the premises they had been living in and had not been forcibly evicted. Memorial confirmed that this is not the case, and that many families from this and the other hostels had received eviction notices and had no-where to go. However, many families are too cautious to publicly protest against their forced eviction fearing this may only make their situation worse.

The family hostels were intended as a temporary accommodation for internally displaced people who had lost their properties during the two conflicts in the Chechen Republic in the 1990s and early 2000s. The families residing there live on small incomes, and have no where else to go. They have received no or very little state support to which they are entitled by national law to enable them to rebuild their properties or build new ones. Because of the temporary nature of the accommodation, most residents of the hostels were unable to register there, and are still registered at their previous addresses (which is a legal requirement). The letter from the Prosecutor’s Office implicitly refers to the registration of the families elsewhere, using it to claim that the families have “no rights and no documents confirming such rights” to live at the hostels. This disregards the fact that the properties at which they are registered have been destroyed. The local authorities have now filed a case in court seeking eviction of a number of families who have failed to move out.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian or your own language:

- Urge the authorities to halt any further evictions of people from the *obshchezhities* (family hostels) in Grozny until adequate alternative accommodation can be provided;
- Urge them to ensure that no one is evicted without due process, adequate notice, consultation and that all of those affected have access to adequate alternative accommodation;
- Stress the UN Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons which state that such persons have the right to an adequate standard of living, including basic shelter and housing, and protection against arbitrary displacement.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS (INCLUDING A RETURN ADDRESS) BEFORE 10 MAY 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>

Prosecutor General

Yurii Ya. Chaika
ul. B.Dimitrovka, d. 15a
Moscow, GSP-3
107048
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 (495) 692 17 25
Email: prgenproc@gov.ru
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Mikhail M. Savchin, Prosecutor
Prosecutor's Office of the Chechen Republic
ul. Idrisova, 42
364000 Grozny
Chechen Republic
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 (8712) 22 33 56
Email: procurat-chech@mail.ru

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 22/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/005/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Chechen Republic in the Russian Federation has been the site of two military conflicts since 1994. 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. 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 displaced people to return to their original place of residence, sometimes without due consideration for people's ongoing security, economic and other concerns. While such evictions contradict Russian and international law, most evictees are too afraid to challenge the Chechen authorities and file official complaints. Reportedly, some of those evicted have been allegedly forced by armed law enforcement officials to sign statements stating that they were moving out voluntarily.

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