

The case of Timur Soltakhanov

Amnesty International interviewed Zara Gekaeva (54), a widow from Avtury, whose 27-year-old son was detained by armed men in the centre of the small Chechen town, Shali, on 7 July 2003. According to Zara Gekaeva, who is disabled, her son, Timur Ibragimovich Soltakhanov, who was living with her and taking care of her, was out buying food in the market. She said that a group of masked policemen, and possibly members of the FSB, came to the market in search of a suspected member of an armed opposition group.

The law enforcement officials started shooting at the shoppers, when a young man, whose identity is not known to AI, ran away from the armed men. Reportedly, Timur Soltakhanov was injured by one of the bullets flying around and then detained. Reportedly, he was beaten when being taken into a car and driven to the local procuracy where it was found that he needed urgent medical treatment. However, it appears that he was not taken from there to the hospital, but may instead have been taken to the Russian federal military base in Khankala, Chechnya.

When his mother, together with members of a local human rights organization, turned to the local procuracy, they were told that no one by the name of Timur Soltakhanov was known there and that on 7 July the police had only detained the man.

Zara Gekaeva said that her life stopped on that day. For more than two years now, she has spent all her time looking for her only child. She has written to the authorities in Chechnya and to the federal government in Moscow, she has travelled throughout the North Caucasus in order to meet with human rights activists, journalists and members of the International Committee of the Red Cross, hoping that someone would be able to tell her why her son was detained and what has happened to him.

Please write to the Russian authorities;

- Expressing concern about the fate and well-being of Timur Soltakhanov and urging the authorities to release any information they may have about his whereabouts
- Expressing concern about the alleged ill-treatment of Timur Soltakhanov in July 2003
- Urging to thoroughly and effectively investigate the circumstances of Timur Soltakhanov's "disappearance" and to bring to justice in a court of law, those found responsible.
- Urging the immediate release of Timur Soltakhanov if he is being held by law enforcement officials or for him to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and be given access to a lawyer of his choice and his family.