

URGENT ACTION

YOUNG VICTIM OF VIDEOED TORTURE STILL MISSING

On 5 September, 19-year-old Salman Tepsurkaev was abducted from Krasnodar region in southern Russia. He had moderated 1ADAT, a popular Telegram channel critical of the Chechen authorities. Reports indicate that he was taken to Chechnya and may be held in secret incommunicado detention by law enforcement officials in the Chechen capital Grozny. While Salman Tepsurkaev's whereabouts remain unknown, a video has appeared on social media where he is seen being sexually violated, "in punishment" for cooperating with 1ADAT.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

**Head of the Investigative Directorate
Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Chechen Republic
Lt.-Gen. Vitaly Gheorgievich Volkov**

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Dear Head of the Investigative Directorate,

I am deeply dismayed by the reports of abduction and torture, including sexual violence, of **Salman Tepsurkaev**, a 19-year-old moderator of the 1ADAT Telegram channel known for its criticism of the Chechen authorities and dissemination of information on human rights violations committed in Chechnya.

As you will be well aware from numerous media publications, after Salman Tepsurkaev went missing on 5 September in Gelendzhik, Krasnodar region, a video appeared on social media, on 7 September, in which he is seen being subjected to sexual violence. The video ends with Salman Tepsurkaev saying this was a punishment for cooperating with 1ADAT.

1ADAT, independent Russian media and human rights organisations have since published new video footage and other evidence which suggest that Salman Tepsurkaev was abducted by members of Chechen security forces and taken to Chechnya where he has been unlawfully detained since. These sources have also named the location of law enforcement premises in Grozny where he has likely been unlawfully detained, and held incommunicado, which substantially increases the risk of further torture or other ill-treatment.

In the light of the above I urge you to:

- **Take swift action to establish Salman Tepsurkaev's fate and whereabouts, and ensure his immediate and unconditional release, and ensure he has access to justice and effective remedies;**
- **Conduct a full, effective, independent and impartial investigation into the reported circumstances of Salman Tepsurkaev's abduction, and into all allegations of sexual assault, torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that all those suspected of responsibility are identified and brought to justice in fair trial proceedings.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Telegram channel (chat) 1ADAT was set up in early March 2020 and the number of its subscribers rapidly grew to several thousand. It publishes information about human rights violations, including abductions and unlawful detentions, in Chechnya, as well as satirical sketches about Chechen officials. The channel has several administrators who remain anonymous and call themselves a “people’s movement” and “warriors against Ramzan Kadyrov’s regime”.

According to the independent Russian *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, the Chechen authorities have been attempting to identify the channel’s creators, administrators and contributing authors – most of whom are believed to be located in Chechnya – since May. Due to the security measures taken by the channel administrators, the authorities’ attempts were unsuccessful until Salman Tepsurkaev compromised his anonymity by disclosing his personal details to a likely undercover law enforcement official.

Under the leadership of Kremlin-appointed Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya is the place where numerous human rights violations are being committed, with virtually total impunity for their perpetrators, and free speech has been brutally suppressed for years. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have documented multiple instances when critics of the regime, including human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, have been prosecuted and imprisoned under fabricated criminal charges, or abducted and killed. Members of the general public who dare to criticise Ramzan Kadyrov, members of his administration, his relatives or associates, or complain about local problems such as the closure of a hospital, or even ask for help in ways which reflect negatively on Chechnya (for instance, ask for help to provide for a large family), are often being forced to humiliate themselves in front of a camera and publicly “apologise” for their actions, which is recorded and then broadcast on the local television or via social media. This practice has been widely used since 2015. Thus, in December 2015 a local man was filmed apologising for having criticised Ramzan Kadyrov and pledging loyalty to the Chechen authorities, with his trousers dropped down.

Ramzan Kadyrov’s critics are not safe abroad either, and numerous suspicious attacks and assassinations which appear to have been instigated from Chechnya, have been reported. For instance, on 13 January 2009, former Ramzan Kadyrov’s bodyguard and later public critic, Umar Israilov, whose testimony directly implicated the Chechen leader in torture and other human rights violations, was shot and killed in Vienna, Austria. On 1 February 2020, the body of Chechen blogger Imran Aliev (alias “Mansur the Old”), was found in Lille, France. On 4 July 2020, blogger Mamikhan Umarov was shot dead in the suburbs of Vienna. Both bloggers were ardent critics of Kadyrov and his regime. On 26 February 2020, another popular blogger and critic of Kadyrov’s regime, Tumso Abdurakhmanov who lives in exile in one of the European countries, was attacked with a hammer by an intruder while sleeping in his flat. He managed to overpower his attacker and survived

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 November 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Salman Tepsurkaev (he/him)