

UA 16/02 Torture/ill-treatment/"disappearance"/arbitrary detention

16 January 2002

RUSSIAN FEDERATION /Shaikh-Akhmed Magomadov (m), aged 25

CHECHEN REPUBLIC Akhmed Ezerpashaevich Baisultanov (m), aged 39

Khanpash Ezerpashaevich Baisultanov (m), aged 33

Suleyman Ezerpashaevich Baisultanov (m), aged 28

Salamu Maziev (m), aged 41

Khamzat Israilov (m), aged 32

Malika Ustrakhanova (f)

Abbas Magomadov (m), aged 19

Khamzat Israilov

Shamil Mandyzhadziev (m), aged 46

Hundreds of other Chechen civilians

The 10 civilians named above "disappeared" after they were taken into custody by Russian forces during a raid on the village of Tsotsyn-Yurt, in the Kurchaloy district of Chechnya. Russian soldiers reportedly killed several villagers during the raid, and tortured others. Those in custody are in grave danger of being tortured or killed.

Tsotsyn-Yurt is about 40km east of the capital, Grozny. On 29 December Russian soldiers cordoned the village off with armoured cars. On 30 December at 3am a group of soldiers entered the village, reportedly under the control of a Major-General, searching for Chechen fighters who had supposedly sought shelter in the village. They rounded up a large group of males aged between 14 and 60, some possibly younger. The soldiers apparently took them to the outskirts of the village, stripped them and beat them. The soldiers reportedly tried to cut off the ear of one of these men, named Magomadov, and cut another man's fingers off. They held around 100 men for at least two days, forcing them to sleep outdoors in freezing temperatures.

The soldiers let most of the men go on 1 January. Many had reportedly been so severely beaten that they could not walk. They apparently took a number of the men away with them, including the first seven people named above: they have not been seen since. Soldiers apparently took Malika Ustrakhanova from her three young children, and beat her on the back and hands, claiming she had information about Chechen fighters.

Shaikh-Akhmed Magomadov's brother, Abbas, went to the Temporary Department of Internal Affairs (VOVD) in Kurchaloy on 4 January to find out where his brother was. He was taken into custody, and has not been seen since.

On 7 January, villagers found three bodies, badly disfigured by explosives, and identified one of them as 23-year-old Alkhazur Saidselimov, who had been one of the men taken away after the raid.

During the raid, soldiers had reportedly approached the house of 70-year-old Leche Idrisov, where two Chechen fighters had hidden, using two men, Musa Ismailov and Idris Zakriev, as human shields. In the ensuing gunfight both men were severely wounded. Russian soldiers reportedly then shot both men dead and took their bodies away. A relative of Leche Idrisov, Khamzat Israilov, was also severely wounded in the exchange; Russian soldiers took him away and he has since "disappeared". The bodies of Musa Ismailov and Idris Zakriev were

found on 3 January: they had allegedly been severely mutilated with knives, and had their ears and noses cut off.

Soldiers were said to have beaten and tortured Idris Khadaev (23) in his courtyard, who later died from his injuries; the son of the Tsakaev family also reportedly died as a result of torture.

An Amnesty International representative has gathered first-hand accounts of villagers being tortured and killed during earlier raids on Tsotsyn-Yurt. On 8 October Russian soldiers severely beat a number of villagers. When a group of villagers tried to intervene, soldiers fired a rifle grenade at point-blank range, injuring two women. On 6 November soldiers raided Shamil Mandykhadzhev's house, shooting him in both legs and beating his wife and 16-year-old son with rifle butts. Shamil was taken to hospital, but Russian forces took him into custody there and his whereabouts are now unknown.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During raids on Chechen villages, known in Russian as "zachistki" (literally, "clean-up"), Russian forces ostensibly check the passports and registration of civilians. However, in practice, Russian soldiers have arbitrarily detained, tortured, abducted and extrajudicially executed civilians.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Russian or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that Russian soldiers have repeatedly raided the village of Tsotsyn-Yurt, in the Kurchaloy district of Chechnya, torturing, killing and abducting civilians;
- urging the Russian authorities to protect the residents of Tsotsyn-Yurt and other villages in Chechnya against torture and ill-treatment;
- expressing concern for the safety of the 10 people named above, and urging the authorities to find out where they are and release them immediately unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- asking for a prompt investigation into all allegations of arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment during so-called "zachistki" in Tsotsyn-Yurt over the past several months and in the Chechen Republic in general.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin

Kreml

Moskva

Russian Federation

Telegrams: PUTIN V, Kreml, Moskva, Russia

Fax: +7 095 206 6277/8510/5173/ +7 095 230 2408

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Salutation: Dear President Putin

Procurator General of the Russian Federation,

Vladimir USTINOV

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Russian Federation

Fax: +7 095 292 88 48

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on Human Rights and Freedoms in the Chechen Republic

Vladimir Kalamonov

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and to diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 February 2002.