

Public Statement

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Russian Federation: Women and girls victims of human rights abuses (selected case studies)

I. Women and girls in the Chechen Republic

· On the night of 26 March 2000, Kheda (Elza) Visaevna Kungaeva, aged 18, from the village of Tangi-Chu was kidnapped from her family home by Colonel Yury D. Budanov, the commander of a tank regiment, and his soldiers. Colonel Budanov took Kheda Kungaeva to his tent, reportedly to interrogate her, but instead he strangled her. A Russian army medical expert later concluded that, before she died, Kheda Kungaeva had been raped by several men. The Office of the Procurator General initiated an investigation into this case and on 30 March 2000 Colonel Budanov was arrested. He claimed that during interrogation he attempted to make Kheda Kungaeva confess to being a sniper and that he strangled her in a state of temporary insanity. Colonel Budanov was charged with homicide and abuse of power. He was reportedly placed in custody and in November 2001 underwent a psychiatric examination at the Serbsky Institute in Moscow; the Institute supported his claim that he committed the murder in a state of temporary insanity. At the end of 2001 the trial against Colonel Budanov was ongoing.

· "Irina"*, a 14-year-old girl, originally from Urus-Martan, died in detention at the Chernokozovo detention facility at the beginning of 2000, as a result of being ill-treated and tortured, including being repeatedly raped, by guards. She had been detained at a check-point while travelling on a bus. According to witnesses, the girl was among 60 women held together in cell number 25 in Chernokozovo, who were

subjected to beatings by the guards. Another of these women, "Zuliykhan", was seven months pregnant and, although not beaten, was repeatedly threatened with torture. She was subsequently released and gave birth prematurely.

Rape of pregnant women by Russian forces

On 18 October 2001 Russian federal forces came to the home of "Zainap"* in the village of Kurcheloy intending to detain her husband. When they did not find him in the house, the soldiers allegedly detained "Zainap", who was eight-months pregnant. She was taken to the Temporary Department of Internal Affairs (VOVD) located along with the military command post in the village of Kurcheloy.

Two women witnesses, who were detained along with "Zainap", stated that she was repeatedly gang-raped and ill-treated by Russian soldiers and, as a result, suffered a miscarriage. "Zainap" was released in mid-November in exchange for 10 machine-guns, requested by the Russian forces from her relatives. Upon her release from detention, "Zainap" reportedly underwent surgery. In line with the strong cultural taboo against rape victims in Chechen society, "Zainap's" husband refused to take her back; witnesses reportedly quoted him as saying: "After them, I do not need her. She is dirty now..."

"Disappearance" of women and girls following detention, including during military raids

On 4 March 2001 the blindfolded bodies of 40-year-old Nura Lulueva, her cousins Markha and Raisa Gakaeva and Aset Elbuzdukueva were found on a dumping site in Dachny village near the Russian military base at Khankala. According Nura's husband, the four women regularly travelled from Gudermes to Grozny, to sell strawberries at the market. The four women were reportedly arrested during a raid at a market in

Grozny on 3 June 2000. From that time until the discovery of their bodies, their whereabouts were unknown.

II. Torture and ill-treatment of women in police custody

Alleged ill-treatment of women by police in the Republic of Kalmykia
Nadezhda Ubushaeva told an AI representative that early on the morning of 10 April 2001, she and her family of five, including her pregnant daughter, were forcibly evicted from their home in the Kalmykian capital, Elista. The family went to the main square of Elista to peacefully protest. Nadezhda Ubushaeva alleges that at 4pm that day five police officers dragged her, in the presence of witnesses, to a police car, beating her with what she describes as a hard instrument. According to a medical certificate issued on 13 April 2001, Nadezhda Ubushaeva suffered injuries to her hips, shoulders and face. She was taken to a police station and held for about two hours. Continuing her protest at the eviction of her family, on 4 July 2001 Nadezhda Ubushaeva, along with two other women, conducted a hunger strike in the central square, where they were reportedly ill-treated again by a group of men. The three women claimed that the men were law enforcement officials, acting on orders of the local authorities. Nadezhda Ubushaeva reportedly complained about her ill-treatment to the Office of the Procurator of the Republic of Kalmykia. AI is not aware of any official investigation into these allegations.

Torture and ill-treatment of Chechens outside of Chechnya

Zara Isaeva, an ethnic Chechen woman, was visiting Moscow for medical treatment. On 14 September 1999 she was detained at the home of her brother along with one of his friends, Musa Vagaev, and taken to the police station at Zhulebino. Later, her brother, Zavlady Isaev, was also brought to the police station. Zara Isaeva stated that during interrogation, police officers threatened to hand her over to "homeless

vagrants” to be raped and to send her to a women's prison. She stated the police officers also ordered her to strip naked for an examination; she was released the following day. She later learned that her brother and his friend had been beaten and forced to sign a confession relating to the possession of drugs. The police threatened that if they refused to sign, the police would arrange for Zara Isaeva to be raped by “criminals” held at the police station.

III. Human rights defenders and independent journalists

III-treatment and persecution of independent journalists

On 8 June 1998, Larisa Yudina, a journalist and editor of the opposition newspaper, *Sovietskaya Kalmykia Sevodnya* (Soviet Kalmykia Today), was found dead with multiple knife wounds and a fractured skull in the capital of the Republic of Kalmykia, Elista. Members of the liberal Yabloko party to which she belonged, and human rights advocates maintain that the killing was politically motivated. Prior to her death, she had published articles accusing the Kalmykian President, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, of corruption. Three men were convicted in connection with the murder, but the names of those who ordered the killing remain unknown.

* Various names and identities have been withheld to protect the victims.

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