

AI INDEX: EUR 46/09/00  
17 February 2000

## **Chechnya: Russian government should open doors of filtration camps to international scrutiny**

“The appointment of a special representative on Chechnya to respond to complaints about human rights abuses is yet another public relations exercise by the Russian government under growing international pressure,” Amnesty International said today.

The Russian authorities have refused calls to allow access for international human rights monitors to Chechnya and have instead appointed as a special representative on human rights in Chechnya, Vladimir Kalamanov, the head of the Russian immigration service.

Following official denials today of atrocities in “filtration camps”, the first task for Vladimir Kalamanov should be to allow access for international and national human rights organizations to Chechnya and the “filtration camps” to see for themselves whether there is evidence of human rights violations.

“If the Russian government has nothing to hide it would investigate allegations of torture and ill-treatment, including rape, in “filtration camps”, as well as extrajudicial executions of civilians in Grozny and give access to Chechnya first and foremost to the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross,” Amnesty International said.

The Russian government should immediately make public the names, whereabouts, current state of health and the charges brought against anyone detained in the four or more “filtration camps”.

The Chechen Minister of Health, Omar Khambiev, a surgeon and his team of up to 24 male and female doctors and nurses were detained by Russian Federal forces on 2 or 3 February. Amnesty International has received information that they are held in the Mozdok “filtration camp” situated on the premises of the military base. Omar Khambiev was allegedly targeted by the Russian forces because his brother, Magomed Khambiev, is a well-known Chechen military commander.

The Russian government had denied all along the existence of secret “filtration camps”. Nobody knows the exact number of detainees in the “filtration camps” but there are reportedly at least 700 detainees in the Chernokozovo camp alone.

The Head of the Main Department for Execution of Punishments in the Russian Ministry of Justice, Vladimir Yelunin, denied in a media interview all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in “filtration camps”. The only problem recognized by Vladimir Yelunin was that “it's dark and damp there”.

Meanwhile the representative of the Main Department of the Procurator General’s Office in the North Caucasus, Sergey Prokopov, told ITAR-TASS news agency that after the seizure of Grozny “the holdovers have been replenished with a large amount of prisoners.”

As reported by Amnesty International last November, women and men are subjected to “filtration” when their identity documents are checked against computer data, which allegedly includes information on suspected members of armed Chechen groups and their relatives. They are usually kept for some time at a detention place at the checkpoint and then taken to “filtration camps”. Hundreds of men and teenage boys have also been reportedly detained in the towns and villages of Naursky District, Grozny and other regions under the control of the Russian forces and taken to “filtration camps”.

Amnesty International is concerned that arbitrary detention of people in such camps, without access to their relatives, lawyers, or the outside world would facilitate the practice of torture and ill treatment. The organization documented a large number of cases of torture and ill-treatment, including electric shocks, in “filtration camps” during the 1994 to 1996 armed conflict in the Chechen Republic. Men between the ages of 16 and 55 were held in such camps throughout the war in Chechnya.

ENDS.../

\*\*\*\*\*

**For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>**