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AI INDEX: EUR 46/17/96

21 MARCH 1996

RUSSIA (CHECHNYA): AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SAYS WORLD MUST PROTECT
CIVILIANS OF SAMASHKI

Amnesty International today called for international pressure on the Russian Government to save thousands of civilians trapped beneath a Russian bombardment of the Chechen settlement of Samashki.

Reports indicate that civilians are dying because of indiscriminate Russian military action to root out Chechen fighters in Samashki

“Only concerted international diplomatic pressure can make the Russian authorities concern themselves with the plight of civilians caught up in the conflict,” Amnesty International said today. “At the very least those people should be guaranteed a safe route away from the fighting.”

Russian forces began attacking Samashki on 15 March with rockets, grenades and from the air. Civilians who managed to escape from the settlement on 19 March reported that 3,000-4,000 civilians were still sheltering in cellars and basements. They estimated that up to 600 people had been killed.

Civilians fleeing the village say it has been sealed off by Russian forces, disputing claims by the Russian military leadership that a “humanitarian corridor” remains open for civilians to leave Samashki.

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