RUSSIAN FEDERATION - Chechen Republic

Residents of Alkhan Khala village

Russian forces surrounded the village of Alkhan Khala, near the Chechen capital Grozny, on 20 July and, according to reports from the Ingushetian office of *Memorial*, a Russian human rights organization, the village remains cut off. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the civilian population who may be facing torture and "disappearance".

The village is undergoing a '*zachistka*' or 'cleansing operation', officially intended to gather information about the activities of unofficial armed Chechen groups.

In recent weeks such operations have been accompanied by reports of Russian forces looting and subjecting people to torture and 'disappearance'. The Commander of the combined federal forces in the Northern Caucasus publicly admitted on 11 July that "crimes on a large scale were committed during round-ups of civilians in Sernovodsk and Assinovskaya"

On 10 July the Procurator General of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Ustinov, send two teams of investigators to Chechnya to look into the activities of the military, but the "cleansing operations" continue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several "cleansing operations" have been reported from villages in the Chechen Republic in recent weeks. Soldiers have entered houses in the villages of Assinovskaya, Sernovodsk, Chernorechye, Kuchaloy, Serzhen-Yurt and elsewhere, looted - and in some cases destroyed - the houses and rounded-up the male inhabitants.

On 3 July all the men aged 16 and above from Assinovskaya were gathered together in a field for questioning. They were allegedly severely beaten and subjected to electro-shock torture. The whereabouts of four villagers is now unknown. The same happened the day before in the village of Sernovodsk. Most of the men there were later released but about a hundred people were allegedly taken to a temporary detention centre in Achkoy-Martan where the beatings continued. After two days most of these were released but at least six remain missing.

On 28 June soldiers reportedly took the men from the village of Chernorechye to a building near the water reservoir in Grozny where they were tortured and ill-treated. Allegedly one man who dared to speak up against the soldiers was shot in the leg and taken out of the room when he lost consciousness. His present whereabouts are unknown.

An unknown number of people from the villages of Chernorechye, Kuchaloy and Serzhen-Yurt also remain missing.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian, English, or your own language:
- urging the Russian authorities to protect the residents of Alkhan-Khala and other villages in Chechnya against beatings and torture;

- urging the authorities to establish the whereabouts of those missing from the villages named and to release them immediately unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- asking for a prompt investigation into all allegations of torture, arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment during so-called "cleansing operations" in the Chechen Republic.

APPEALS TO:

<u>President of the Russian Federation</u>
Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin
Kreml
Moskva
Russian Federation
Telegrams: PUTIN V, Kreml, Moskva, Russia
Fax: +7 095 206 6277; +7 095 206 8510; +7 095 206 51 73; +7 095 230 2408
e-mail: president@gov.ru

<u>Procurator General of the Russian Federation</u>,
Vladimir USTINOV
Ul. B. Dimitrovka, d.15a
103793 g. Moskva K-31
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 095 292 88 48

COPIES TO:

<u>Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation on Human Rights and Freedoms in the Chechen Republic</u>
Vladimir Kalamanov
Administratsiya Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii
Staraya ploshad pod. 6,
103132 g. Moskva
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 095 206 73 44

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 3 September 2001.