

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 46/24/96

1 May 1996

Further information on EXTRA 34/96 (EUR 46/13/96, 7 March 1996) and follow-ups (EUR 46/14/96, 12 March; EUR 46/16/96, 19 March; EUR 46/23/96, 23 April 1996) - Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial executions / Fear of torture

CHECHEN REPUBLIC - RUSSIAN FEDERATION Civilians under Russian bombardment

Continued fear for safety of civilians in Shali

Amnesty International continues to be gravely concerned for the safety of about 50,000 civilians remaining in the Chechen town of Shali.

It was reported that on 26 April 1996 Shali came under attack from Russian forces, similar to those launched against the towns of Sernovodsk and Samashki in March (as a result of which hundreds of civilians are believed to have been killed). The attack on Shali resulted in at least 11 injuries among the civilians, including women and children. Reports indicated that during an attempt to flee Shali, a humanitarian convoy of several buses with Chechen women and children was opened fire at by the Russian forces. As a result nine people were injured and later one woman died.

On the same day about 1,000 Chechen women and children reportedly fled Shali. Russian commanders have said hundreds of Chechen fighters are living in Shali, a claim which the refugees coming out of the town denied.

On 28 April it was reported that the elders in Shali struck a deal with the Russian forces to stop further aerial bombardment of the town. In return the elders have promised to escort Russian convoys in Chechnya to guard against Chechen fighters' attacks.

However, it is feared that the attacks on Shali might continue in spite of the peace agreement reportedly achieved between the town's elders and the Russian forces. On 25 April it was reported that the village of Chishki came under attack from Russian air planes and as a result one woman was killed. This attack occurred a few days after the citizens of Chishki reportedly signed a peace agreement with the Russian federal forces.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian or in your own language:

- calling for all steps to be taken to ensure the safety of civilians in Shali, and to uphold basic principles of international humanitarian law in particular as regards the protection of the civilian population;
- calling on the Russian Government to comply with its commitments on respect for human rights, given to the Council of Europe upon Russia's acceptance to the Council in February 1996, including the commitment to "respect strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law, including in cases of armed conflicts on its territory";
- urging the Russian Government to comply with its commitments to protect human rights in times of armed conflict, given to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), when Russia signed the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security in December 1994.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin

Rossiyskaya Federatsiya

g. Moskva

Kreml

Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii

Yeltsinu B.N.

Faxes: +7095 206 5173

Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Yeltsinu

Salutation: Dear President

President's Special Envoy in Chechnya, Oleg Lobov

Faxes: +7095 206 0717

COPIES TO:

Russian Federation Minister of Defence, General Pavel Grachev

Rossiyskaya Federatsiya

103175 g. Moskva

ul. Myasnitskaya, 37

Ministerstvo oborony

Ministru Grachevu P.S.

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 June 1996.