

Amnesty International public document - AI Index EUR 46/036/2000 - News Service Nr. 110

Embargoed for : 08/06/2000 09:00 GMT

Russian Federation: Continuing torture and rape in Chechnya

"One of them was an investigator, called Vasiliy. I heard how he ordered: "Let's do it." And they began forcing wooden clubs into me... I cried and cried and called for help -- I was in so much pain. I lost consciousness many times. I heard one of them said: "We will make you incapable of producing children."

"Zelimkhan"*, 20, a survivor of the "Internat" "filtration camp"

Despite recent Russian government assurances that all crimes against civilians will be investigated, Amnesty International continues to collect evidence of daily abuses in Chechnya and the perpetrators remain unpunished.

Amnesty International has received new disturbing testimonies from survivors of the "Internat" filtration camp in the town of Urus-Martan in Chechnya that detainees, including children, have continued to be raped and subjected to other brutal torture. Amnesty International had previously obtained testimonies from four former detainees at the "Internat" camp, who independently confirmed torture and ill-treatment in the camp. The organization also has information, including the conclusions of a postmortem medical examination, about at least one person who died as a result of torture and ill-treatment at the "Internat" camp.

Amnesty International's field researcher recently interviewed two victims in Ingushetia, who were held in the "Internat" between 6 May and 13 May 2000.

Twenty-year-old "Zelimkhan" was detained on 6 May at his parents' house in Urus-Martan by a group of about 15 Russian federal forces officers, allegedly members of the special detachments (OMON) from the Russian city of Penza. He was taken to the outskirts of Komsomolskoye village, ordered to take his clothes off, handcuffed and forced onto his knees in front of a hole in the ground, three metres deep and five to six metres wide.

"Zelimkhan" was beaten with clubs for about two hours by four OMON officers while the rest of the group were watching and laughing. He was asked to sign a confession stating he was a Chechen fighter and that he took part in the fighting around Komsomolskoye. They threatened to kill him and to send him to Chernokozovo camp where he would be raped by the guards. Later the same day, "Zelimkhan" was taken to the "Internat" camp.

In the "Internat" he was brutally gang-raped by four or five OMON officers. "Zelimkhan" was blindfolded and handcuffed and ordered to lay on a table face down before being raped with wooden clubs and the butt of machine-guns. He was also repeatedly kicked in the area of the genitals while asked to stand naked by a wall. "Zelimkhan" said the officers also squeezed his genitals, repeatedly saying they would make him handicapped and incapable of producing children. The rape and beatings continued for two hours. He was questioned by Vasiliy, the investigator who had ordered the rape, and asked to sign a confession that he was a Chechen fighter, which he refused.

"Zelimkhan" was severely beaten and tortured several times each day during his detention, with the exception of 9 May when no detainees were beaten because the guards were celebrating the national holiday -- the Victory over Fascism Day.

"Zelimkhan" also told Amnesty International about one of his cell mates, Rustam Gandarov from Urus-Martan who was subjected to electric shocks and beaten by the guards for seven hours without a break. Rustam Gandarov was being held in the "Internat" for a third time. The previous time he was reportedly released after his relatives paid \$3,500. He was subsequently detained twice again.

"Zelimkhan" also told Amnesty International that detainees in the "Internat" have their ears pierced with sharp nails. One of his cell mates, 20-year-old Beslan Satabayev, had his ears pierced with nails. He was also handcuffed and suspended from the ceiling while being beaten all over his body. Beslan Satabayev was later transferred to the camp in Chernokozovo.

Children were also tortured and ill-treated in the "Internat". "Zelimkhan" witnessed how 15-year-old Timur, a student at School No. 4 in Urus-Martan, was severely beaten by the guards and a number of his ribs were broken. Timur was apparently detained together with his uncle, who was suspected of being a Chechen fighter. The guards beat Timur repeatedly during his eight days in detention in order to force him to confess that his uncle was a fighter. Eventually Timur was released when the family paid \$700 to the guards.

"Zelimkhan" was released on 13 May for the sum of \$300 after being forced by the "Internat" authorities to sign a document claiming that he had not been subjected to ill-treatment and had been treated humanely. After his release he was immediately hospitalized at the

hospital in Urus-Martan in a serious condition. In a statement the doctors treating him concluded that he had sustained numerous bruises and haematomas in the area of his ribs and chest and in the area of his kidneys, and that he needed treatment by a urologist because of an inflammation and infection in the genitals.

Forty-year-old "Nurdy", and his neighbours "Dzhamal" and Maksim (an ethnic Russian man who was helping "Dzhamal" with farming), were arrested on 6 May at home in Urus-Martan on suspicion of participating in hostage-taking. All three were taken to the "Internat" and repeatedly tortured and beaten by the guards in an attempt to force them to confess to being Chechen fighters and involved in hostage-taking.

When Maksim told the guards that he was not a hostage they beat him. Because he was not a Chechen, the guards left him to sleep in the corridor outside the cells and used him to clean the camp.

"Nurdy" told Amnesty International that on arrival at the camp he was beaten by a group of about 15 officers. He was also subjected to a torture method known in Russia as "envelope" (konvert), in which the victim's legs are pulled up to his head and secured while his hands are handcuffed behind his back. "Zelimkhan" told Amnesty International that he witnessed the beatings of "Nurdy" through a small hole in his cell door.

He saw how the officers repeatedly dragged "Nurdy" up by his arms and pushed him with force against the wall. "Nurdy" said he lost consciousness several times.

On 7 May, "Nurdy" was beaten again to force him to sign a confession that he was a fighter. The guards threatened to kill him and cut off his ears. He refused to sign and they beat him over the fresh wounds on his back with a chair and smashed his finger under the chair by sitting on it. Following the beatings, a doctor gave "Nurdy" several

shots but on 9 May his health deteriorated further and he was taken to the hospital in Urus-Martan.

"Nurdy" told Amnesty International that there were six or seven detainees in his cell and there were no beds or sanitary facility; only an empty bottle used by all detainees. "Nurdy" independently confirmed "Zelimkhan"'s reports of the use of electric shocks on detainees in the camp.

"Dzhamal" was released on 16 May and was immediately hospitalized in Urus-Martan where a medical examination concluded that he had broken ribs and bruising, haematomas and injuries in the area of the chest, head and the arms. The guards at the "Internat" asked him to take Maksim, who was also released on 16 May, away with him.

Background

Russian forces are still reported to be constantly detaining people in Chechnya at checkpoints and in the territories under their control, either during so-called "cleansing operations" in newly-occupied towns or during identity checks on civilian convoys travelling from Chechnya to neighbouring Ingushetia. People are most often detained for not having proper registration and a residence permit, or on suspicion of belonging to armed Chechen groups. Women are also detained on suspicion of being related to Chechen fighters.

People detained by Russian forces are then sent to various secret "filtration camps" where they are held without access to their relatives, lawyers, or the outside world. Amnesty International has collected testimonies from survivors of "filtration camps" which confirm that detainees -- men, women and children -- are routinely and systematically tortured: they are raped, beaten with hammers and clubs, tortured with electric shocks and tear gas, their teeth are sawn and

some are beaten around both ears simultaneously to burst the ear-drums.

ENDS.../

* These are not real names. They have been changed for the individuals' security.

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web :

<http://www.amnesty.org>