

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 46/38/96

21 August 1996

Further information on EXTRA 127/96 (EUR 46/36/96, 14 August 1996) and follow-up (EUR 46/37/96 16 August 1996) - Fear for safety

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- CHECHEN REPUBLIC Civilians in Grozny

Amnesty International is highly alarmed at the threat of an all-out attack, scheduled for 22 August 1996, on the city of Grozny in the Chechen Republic, and fears for the safety of the civilians who remain in the city.

Russia's acting commander in Chechnya, General Konstantin Pulikovsky, vowed on 20 August 1996 to drive Chechen fighters from the city, using "all the forces and means available, including bombers and ground-attack aircraft, and also multiple rocket launchers and artillery to strike at the guerrilla's positions".

Doku Zavgayev, who leads the Moscow-backed administration in the Chechen Republic, is reported to have said that there may be as many as 300,000 civilians remaining in Grozny.

General Pulikovsky gave civilians 48 hours from 20 August to leave the city, but Amnesty International is gravely concerned at reports that many people are unable to leave the city, because some routes are blocked by Russian forces. General Pulikovsky reportedly warned civilians that they should evacuate the city via the northeastern districts, as other routes are blocked and mined.

There is some confusion over political backing for General Pulikovsky's ultimatum: Aleksandr Lebed, the presidential envoy to the Chechen Republic warned that implementation of General Pulikovsky's threat would only "make the situation even worse, driving it into a dead end".

On 19 August, Russian shells are reported to have been fired in the southwest and southeast areas of Grozny. Six are said to have landed next to a railway bridge, one of the few remaining escape routes out of the city. Civilians are said to be among the dead.

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

- calling on the Russian authorities to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure that all civilians wishing to leave Grozny are able to do so in safety;
- calling for the basic principles of international humanitarian law, in particular as regards the protection of the civilian population, to be respected.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
g. Moskva
Kreml
Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii
Yeltsinu B.N

Faxes: +7095 206 51 73

Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Yeltsinu
Salutation: Dear President

President Yeltsin's Special Envoy in Chechnya, Aleksandr Lebed
Faxes: +7095 206 0717

Russian Federation Minister of Defence, Igor Rodionov
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
103175 g. Moskva
ul. Myasnitskaya, 37
Ministerstvo oborony
Ministru Rodionovu I.

Telegrams: Defence Minister, Moscow, Russia
Salutation: Dear Minister

Russian Federation Minister of the Interior, Col.-Gen. Anatoly Kulikov
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
g. Moskva
ul. Zhitnaya, 16
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii
Ministru Gen.-Polk. Kulikovu

Faxes: + 7095 230 25 80
Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Ministru vnutrennikh del
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Yevgeny Primakov
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya
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Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RF
Ministru Primakovu Ye.
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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 17 September 1996.