

EXTRA 176/99

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION: CHECHNYA Civilians in Grozny**

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of civilians remaining in Grozny, capital of the Chechen Republic. On 6 December the Russian Federal authorities gave them an ultimatum to leave the capital by 11 December or risk their lives.

Leaflets dropped over Grozny by Russian Federal aircraft on 6 December warn residents to leave within five days: "Only in this way will you be able to avoid death and save your city." Another leaflet reportedly states that Russian Federal armed forces will consider all those remaining in Grozny after the deadline to be "terrorists and bandits. They will be destroyed by artillery and aviation."

Estimates of the number of civilians remaining in Grozny range from 10,000 to 50,000.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

While Amnesty International takes no position on the reason for armed conflicts, or the resort to the use of force *per se*, it does call on all parties to a conflict to abide by international humanitarian law. The organization reports on and takes action against specific human rights abuses occurring in situations of conflict, including unlawful killing of civilians, detention without charge or trial, the torture, ill-treatment or extrajudicial execution of persons detained, including soldiers or other combatants who are *hors de combat*, the use of the death penalty, the taking of hostages or the "disappearance" or abduction of any person.

The Russian military's continuing bombing in Chechnya over recent weeks has resulted in civilian casualties and in the flight of thousands of people from the Chechen Republic. The air raids began in September 1999 after explosions in apartment blocks in Moscow and two other Russian cities, which killed at least 292 people, and which the Russian Government has blamed on Islamic groups from the Chechen Republic, but for which no group has yet claimed responsibility.

In September Russian law enforcement officials and local authorities in Moscow and other big cities launched what appeared to be a massive intimidation campaign to enforce the unlawful practice of "resident permits" or "registration", which allegedly targeted mainly Chechens and other people from the Caucasus. Amnesty International has received reports over the past two months which indicated arbitrary detention and expulsion, including incidents of ill-treatment in custody, of Chechens and other people from the Caucasus by Russian law enforcement officials and the local authorities in Moscow and other big cities in the Russian Federation. The organization has emphasized to the Russian authorities that "fighting crime and terrorism" is no justification for violating human rights.

Amnesty International is deeply troubled by repeated reports that Russian forces have committed grave breaches of humanitarian law during the campaign in Chechnya. Most recently, a correspondent for the Prague-based Radio Liberty reported that on 3 December Russian troops deliberately killed at least 40 civilians who were trying to flee Grozny in a humanitarian convoy. Russian authorities have denied the report.

For further information on the conflict in Chechnya, please visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>

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

- pointing out that, regardless of any warning given, the Russian authorities are not absolved from their commitment to international humanitarian law;
- urging the Russian authorities to publicly commit to upholding their obligations under international humanitarian law by refraining from indiscriminate or direct attacks on the civilian population of Grozny;
- urging the Russian authorities to comply with all other provisions of international humanitarian law, regarding the protection of civilians during armed conflict.

**APPEALS TO: (please note, faxes are usually turned off out of office hours; Moscow is 3 hours ahead of GMT)**

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin  
 Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, g. Moskva, Kreml  
 Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii Yeltsinu B.N  
**Faxes: +7 095 206 6277**  
**Salutation: Dear President**

Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Vladimir PUTIN  
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**Faxes: +7 095 205 4541**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation, Marshal Igor SERGEYEV  
 Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, 103175 g. Moskva, ul. Myasnitskaya, 37, Ministerstvo  
 oborony, Ministru Marsh. Sergeevu  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Russian Federation Minister of Internal Affairs, Vladimir RUSHAILO  
 Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, 117049 g. Moskva, ul. Zhitnaya, 16, Ministerstvo  
 vnutrennikh del, Rossiyskoy Federatsii, Ministru RUSHAILO V.  
**Faxes: +7 095 239 0862**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Igor Ivanov  
 Rossiyskaya Federatsiya, g. Moskva 121200, Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 32/34  
 Ministerstvo inostrannykh del RF, Ministru IVANOVU I.  
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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 4 January 2000.