

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT/CHECHNYA EU MUST PUSH HARDER ON HUMAN RIGHTS SAYS AMNESTY

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(Brussels 30 May) On the eve of the European Union summit meeting with Russia in St. Petersburg, Amnesty International has challenged the EU, in its dialogue with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, to push harder for concrete improvements in the human rights situation in Chechnya.

Amnesty International has released the text of an Open Letter (www.amnesty-eu.be) detailing new cases of “disappearances” of civilians in Chechnya, which has been sent to the 15 EU heads of state and government and their counterparts in the 10 EU accession countries, who will be present at the summit meeting tomorrow.

“It is now time for the EU to make a meaningful contribution to the solution of the conflict in Chechnya, and achieve concrete results for the human rights of the Chechen population,” said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International’s EU Office.

"If the new enlarged European Union wants Russia as a stable neighbour governed by the rule of law, the EU must rigorously scrutinize Russia's conduct in the Chechen Republic," he said.

“The EU gives constant assurances that these issues are raised at EU-Russia summits. However, there is little proof that the EU is being taken seriously by Russia, and certainly the EU has nothing to show in terms of results,” said Dick Oosting.

Amnesty International’s Open Letter to EU heads of state and government states that despite the recent referendum in Chechnya, the risk to Chechen civilians from indiscriminate attacks by Chechen fighters, from attacks attributed to Chechen rebels, and from special operations and so-called “targeted measures” by the Russian federal forces, have not diminished. Amnesty remains concerned at reports, including by the Prosecutor of the Chechen Republic, that gross human rights violations during such operations continue unabated.

People reportedly continued to “disappear” following detention at checkpoints and during nightly raids. The Open Letter details two cases documented by the Russian human rights organization Memorial, of Chechen civilians who “disappeared” under these circumstances just three weeks ago.

The EU must urge the Russian President to agree to take immediate

action to:

- guarantee protection now of the human rights of the Chechen population including the internally displaced;
- bring to justice those responsible for the grave abuses committed during the conflict in Chechnya;
- grant access to Chechnya to UN human rights rapporteurs, reestablish a monitoring presence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and reaffirm the commitment to cooperate with Council of Europe experts.

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels):

Tel: 32-2-5021499

Fax: 32-2-5025686

Email: amnesty-eu@aieu.be

Web-site: www.amnesty-eu.be