

URGENT ACTION

DEMAND PROTECTION FOR INVESTIGATION TEAM

The investigation into the allegation of unlawful detention and torture of a man is facing obstruction from Chechen police. The investigation team has received threats from the alleged perpetrators and have not been provided with effective security measures when requested.

Islam Umarpashaev was unlawfully detained on 11 December 2009 and held incommunicado for four months by law-enforcement officials in the Chechen capital Grozny (Russian Federation). According to him, during this period he was continuously chained to a radiator in the basement of a building belonging to the Special Police Force (OMON) of the Chechen Ministry of Interior. He was released on 2 April 2010 after intervention by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights.

Both while Islam Umarpashaev was missing, and after his release, the investigation into his unlawful detention by local officials was flagrantly ineffective until responsibility for the investigation was transferred to officials based outside Chechnya, in early 2011. Since then, the investigation has made real progress in identifying some of the people who, according to Islam Umarpashaev, had unlawfully detained and tortured him, and in collecting strong supporting evidence.

Islam Umarpashaev and his family were subjected to pressure by the alleged perpetrators to withdraw their complaint, and have had to relocate to a discreet location outside of Chechnya for fear of retaliation. Meanwhile, according to Russian human rights defenders providing Islam Umarpashaev with legal support, the new investigation team has also received threats from members of local police trying to prevent it from gathering essential evidence on the case. In February 2011, the OMON commander identified by Islam Umarpashaev as one of the people who had tortured him, threatened to open fire if the investigation team attempted to visit the OMON compound where Islam Umarpashaev had been allegedly held and collect evidence. Nonetheless, the investigation team undertook the visit, although it was refused the armed protection which it had requested from the federal Ministry of Interior troops stationed in Chechnya. Since then, the pressure on the team, and the threats issued against it, have continued.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Russian or your own language:

- Welcoming the progress made by the investigation into Islam Umarpashaev's unlawful detention since January;
- Urging the authorities to provide full and effective protection to members of the investigation team as necessary and appropriate in the circumstances;
- Urging the Ministry of Interior to suspend the Chechen OMON Commander identified by Islam Umarpashaev as one of the persons responsible for his torture, and who reportedly issued threats against the investigation team, pending the outcome of the current investigation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JULY 2011 TO:

Minister of Interior of the Russian Federation

Army Gen. Rashid Nurgaliev
Ministry of Interior
ul. Zhitnaia, 16
119049 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: + 7 499 237 49 25

Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General

Yurii Ya. Chaika
Ul. Bolshaia Dmitrovka, 15a
125993 Moscow GSP-3
Russian Federation
Fax: + 7 495 987 58 41

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Chairman, Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation

Aleksandr Bastrykin
Technicheskii per. 2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 265 90 77

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 149/10. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/EUR46/006/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Islam Umarpashaev is one of many people who have been subjected to enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment by members of law enforcement agencies in Chechnya, who act with near total impunity. Investigations into such cases are held by local investigators and are never effective, according to Russian human rights defenders working on the ground in Chechnya.

At a press-conference held on 20 April 2011, a group of Russian human rights defenders published two letters issued by senior officials in the Chechen Republic, the Head of the Investigative Committee and Deputy Prosecutor. These letters, copies of which have been received by Amnesty International, are an admission that effective investigation of forcible disappearances and other serious human rights violations allegedly committed by members of police in Chechnya is virtually impossible. Both letters refer to the case of Islam Umarpashaev amongst others.

Whilst investigation of Islam Umarpashaev's unlawful detention and torture is fraught with many difficulties, it is remarkable that it has made real progress since the beginning of the year. There is however a constant risk that it may not be completed and the perpetrators evade prosecution, either because of the obstructions to the work of the investigation team caused by members of Chechen police, or because the political will at the federal level in Moscow, on which it appears to be continually dependant for its success, may wane.

Further information on UA: 149/10 Index: EUR 46/021/2011 Issue Date: 23 May 2011

