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Russian Federation: European Court of Human Rights finds Russia responsible yet again for enforced disappearance in Chechnya

Amnesty International today called on the Russian authorities to implement in full the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights without delay, as the European Court again found Russia responsible for grave human rights violations during the second Chechen conflict.

In the case of Alikhadzhiyeva v. Russia, the European Court held that Ruslan Alikhadzhiev (or Alikhadzhiyev), speaker of the Chechen parliament during the late 1990s, was detained in the Chechen Republic in May 2000 by Russian state agents. However, the Russian authorities have not made public his fate or whereabouts. The European Court held that Ruslan Alikhadzhiev must be presumed dead following unacknowledged detention, and that liability for his presumed death is attributable to the Russian government.

"The findings of the European Court in the increasing number of cases brought before it in connection with the second Chechen conflict paint a damning picture of the gross human rights violations committed by Russian federal forces, and the consistent unwillingness of the Russian authorities to investigate them effectively," said Nicola Duckworth, Director of Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme.

"The authorities in Russia must ensure that all mass grave sites in the Chechen Republic are examined by forensic experts. Relatives of the disappeared and witnesses should be protected from intimidation and reprisals. A comprehensive list of all those missing, disappeared and abducted should be published. Above all, the fate and whereabouts of all the disappeared or abducted individuals should be established and all those responsible for enforced disappearances and abductions should be brought to justice.

"It remains to be seen whether the recent changes to the structure of the Russian prosecutor's office will adequately address the systematic weaknesses of investigations into serious human rights violations highlighted numerous times by the European Court."

Background

The European Court found violations of Articles 2, 5 and 13 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in respect of the enforced disappearance of Ruslan Alikhadzhiev and the failure to conduct an effective investigation into the circumstances of the disappearance. The European Court also found a violation of Article 3 in respect of the applicant, Zura Alikhadzhiyeva (or Alikhadzhiyeva), Ruslan Alikhadzhiev's mother, due to distress and anguish she has suffered and continues to suffer as a result of the disappearance of her son and her inability to find out what happened to him.

See <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engeur010012001#RUS> for further information.

Public Document

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