

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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## Russian Federation: The case of Kheda Kungaeva

On the night of 26 March 2000, Colonel Yuri Budanov, together with soldiers from his Russian Federal forces unit, went to Kheda Kungaeva's house in the village of Tangi-Chu in Chechnya and abducted her. Colonel Budanov stated that he suspected Kheda Kungaeva of possessing information about Chechen fighters and took her to his tent for interrogation.

By his own admission, supported by a post-mortem examination, Colonel Budanov strangled Kheda Kungaeva to death. The same post-mortem, examined by Amnesty International and carried out by a Ministry of Defence pathologist, concluded that Kheda Kungaeva had been raped shortly before her death. No one has been charged with raping Kheda Kungaeva.

On 30 March 2000 Colonel Budanov was arrested. His trial, which began in February 2001, was adjourned several times for psychiatric assessments. It was widely reported that in the course of the investigation Colonel Budanov had admitted killing Kheda Kungaeva, but had stated that he strangled her during interrogation in a state of "temporary insanity". Earlier psychiatric assessments found him sane and responsible for his actions. The last one was carried out at the court's request by the state-run Serbsky Institute, heavily criticized in Soviet times for its role in the political abuse of psychiatry, and supported Colonel Budanov's claim of "temporary insanity".

On 31 December 2002, the North Caucasus Military Court ruled that Yuri Budanov was not criminally responsible for the murder and ordered that he be transferred to a psychiatric hospital. Russian human rights organizations criticized the court ruling saying the trial was neither 'honest nor just'.

After an appeal a new trial was opened and on 25 July 2003 Colonel Yuri Budanov was found guilty of kidnapping and murdering Kheda Kungaeva and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

Colonel Budanov is the highest ranking member of the Russian security forces in Chechnya to be put on trial for serious crimes against civilians in Chechnya.

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