

URGENT ACTION

A CHECHEN ARRESTED IN MOSCOW, DISAPPEARED

On 15 February, a 28-year-old Chechen man Idris Arsamikov was arbitrarily arrested on fabricated charges of fraud in Moscow Domodedovo airport and transferred to Chechnya. On 17 February, the police at Chechnya's Shelkovsky District Police Department refused to disclose his whereabouts to his lawyers and give them access to their client. His whereabouts remain unknown. Idris Arsamikov had previously reported being arrested and tortured by the Chechen police for his perceived sexual orientation. He is at grave risk of further torture and other ill-treatment and his life is at risk. The Russian authorities must immediately release him and ensure his safety.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of the Investigation Directorate of the Investigation Committee

Vitaliy Georgievich Volkov
Investigation Committee for the Chechen Republic
Ul. Altaiskaya, d.3
Grozny, Chechen Republic
Russian Federation 364000
Email: jp-chechen@sledcom.ru

Dear Head of the Investigation Directorate,

*I am writing to you to express my deep concern regarding the arbitrary arrest on fabricated charges of fraud and enforced disappearance of **Idris Arsamikov**.*

On 15 February, Idris Arsamikov was arbitrarily arrested in Moscow Domodedovo airport and transferred to Chechnya. According to his lawyers, the arrest sheet had been signed by the head of criminal investigation at the Shelkovsky District Police Department, several hours earlier, in relation to a criminal investigation initiated in 2021 when Idris Arsamikov was living in the Netherlands, where he had a refugee status.

On 17 February, the police at Chechnya's Shelkovsky District Police Department refused to disclose Idris Asamikov's whereabouts to his lawyers and give them access to their client. On the same day, two videos were published on Idris Arsamakov's page on VKontakte, allegedly showing him at his home with his mother and uncle, stating that he was fine, denouncing human rights defenders' efforts to help him and making other statements that appear to be forcibly extracted. Since then, his account on the social media has been deleted and his whereabouts remain unknown.

According to Idris Arsamikov's own account, shared with human rights defenders, he had been previously arbitrarily arrested, tortured and otherwise ill-treated by the Chechen police due to his perceived sexual orientation. He is at risk of further torture and other ill-treatment and there is a grave risk to his life. The manner of his apprehension, the allegations of Idris Arasmikov's past ill-treatment by Chechen police and the well-documented campaign by the Chechen authorities' targeting men for their perceived sexual orientation give grounds to believe that Idris Arsamikov is being persecuted for his perceived sexual orientation.

I am calling on you to take a swift action to establish Idris Arsamikov's fate and whereabouts, and ensure his immediate release. I also ask that you ensure that he gets an immediate access to his lawyers, and that he is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2018, Idris Arsamikov (28) fled Russia following his arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment by the Chechen police for his presumed homosexuality. He received a refugee status in the Netherlands. In March 2022, Idris Arsamikov returned to Russia to attend his father's funeral. He had to give up his refugee status. Idris Arsamikov told Russian human rights defenders that upon returning to Chechnya, when he went to the police station in Shelkovskaya village to get a new foreign travel passport, the police issued him a Russian internal passport but confiscated his other documents. Because the authorities refused to issue Arsamikov a foreign travel passport, he had to stay in Chechnya.

On 15 February 2023, Idris Arsamikov left Chechnya and flew to Moscow. Prior to his flight, he told human rights defenders that since his return to Chechnya in March 2022, he had been arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in the Shelkovskiy District Police Department on at least three occasions. He had also received threats from his family members in connection with his perceived sexual orientation. On arrival in Moscow Domodedovo airport he was arrested by the transport police and handed over to men presumed to be Chechen law enforcement officials. On 17 February, when his lawyers came to Chechnya and demanded access to their client, the police did not allow them to enter the building of the Shelkovskiy District Police Department and refused to disclose the whereabouts of their client. The lawyers submitted a complaint against the police actions to the Investigation Committee and to the Police department. Later the same day, two videos were published on Idris Arsamikov's social media page on VKontakte allegedly showing him at his home with his mother and uncle, stating that he was fine, denouncing human rights defenders' efforts to help him and making other statements that appeared to have been forcibly extracted.

Such videos recorded under duress are commonly used by the Chechen authorities to demonstrate that they have allegedly released someone they have in their custody, and "prove" that the relevant person is not ill-treated and is not interested in human rights defenders' help. The authorities also frequently use fabricated criminal cases as a pretext to apprehend those they want in their custody. For instance, in January 2022, the Chechen police arbitrarily apprehended Zarema Musaeva, mother of human rights activists Abubakar and Ibragim Yangulbaevs, and took her from Nizhnii Novgorod where she lived with her family, to Chechnya as a "witness" in a fraud case. There she was arbitrarily accused of and charged with use of violence against a police officer and fraud and remanded in custody. Her trial is ongoing.

In 2017, Russian independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta revealed a brutal crackdown on LGBTI people in Chechnya, when dozens of men were abducted, tortured and killed for their real or perceived sexual orientation. To date, not one person has been held accountable for these reported crimes, and persecution of LGBTI people continues.

Under the leadership of Kremlin-appointed Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya is the place where numerous human rights violations are being committed, with virtually total impunity for their perpetrators, and free speech has been brutally suppressed for years. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have documented multiple instances when critics of the Chechen authorities, including human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, have been prosecuted and imprisoned under fabricated criminal charges, or forcibly disappeared. Members of the general public who dare to criticise Ramzan Kadyrov, members of his administration, his relatives or associates, or complain about local problems such as the closure of a hospital, or even ask for help in ways which may reflect negatively on the Chechen authorities (for instance, ask for help to provide for a large family), are often being forced to make statements in front of a camera and publicly "apologise" for their actions, which is recorded and then broadcast on the local television or via social media. This practice has been widely used since at least 2015.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 20 April 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Idris Arsamikov (he/him)