

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

News Flash

AI Index: EUR 46/001/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 017
20 January 2005

Russian Federation: Human rights group threatened by security forces

Amnesty International is extremely concerned that eight activists working for the human rights group the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society are in danger of being arbitrarily arrested, tortured and "disappeared". This follows the seizure today of their contact information by Russian security forces.

Officers from the Federal Security Service (FSB) raided the organisation's offices in Nizhny Novgorod at about 5pm local time and seized documents containing the contact details of all the staff of the group's newspaper. The contact details of eight staff members living in Chechnya were among those seized.

The security forces also took away the newspaper's registration documents and some editions of the newspaper.

Earlier in the day, the regional branch of the FSB in Nizhny Novgorod summoned Stanislav Dmitrievskii, the head of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society for questioning.

The FSB reportedly considers Stanislav Dmitrievskii a witness in a criminal case relating to materials published by the organization's newspaper *Pravozashchita*. Details of the case are unclear but seem to relate to statements by Chechen opposition figures including Aslan Maskhadov and his UK-based envoy Akhmed Zakayev published by the organization's newspaper.

Amnesty International has reported on a worrying trend of Russian authorities targeting human rights defenders, activists and independent journalists, and in some cases subjecting them to extreme levels of harassment, "disappearances" and killings.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>