

Russian Federation: Appeal Case update: The Russian-Chechen Friendship Society under threat

AI Index: EUR 46/036/2005

Update to AI Index: EUR 46/017/2005

Amnesty International continues to be concerned about the safety of members of the *Russian-Chechen Friendship Society* (RCFS) after receiving information that on 9 September 2005 leaflets were distributed in a neighbourhood of the city of Nizhnii Novgorod, where the executive director of the RCFS and editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Pravo-Zachita* (Rights Protection), Stanislav Dmitrievskii, lives. One such leaflet, which was posted on the door of Stanislav Dmitrievskii's flat, read: "we say no to the pro-Chechen vermins, which live among us at our expenses. Death to the enemy! We wait for you." The leaflet displays a symbol of the National Bolshevik Party and telephone numbers of the head of the party in Nizhnii Novgorod and his deputy. As it seems highly unlikely that the party, which itself has come under sustained pressure from the authorities recently, would leave itself open to prosecution in this way, staff at the Russian Chechen Friendship Society believe that these leaflets are intended to harm both the human rights organization as well as the political party. Similar leaflets were found in March 2005 near the home of Oksana Chelysheva, editor of the *Russian-Chechen Information Agency*, which is part of the RCFS. At that time a criminal case had been opened but was later suspended due to the inability of the procuracy to identify the perpetrator. The RCFS has requested for her case to be re-open and combined with the latest threats to Stanislav Dmitrievskii.

Moreover, on 9 September an article appeared on the website of *Russkaia Linia*, a nationalistic information agency and on the website of *Religiia i SMI* (religion and mass media), calling Stanislav Dmitrievskii a "terrorist" and a "traitor to the fatherland". These comments were made in the context of criminal investigations into Stanislav Dmitrievskii's publication of articles written by former Chechen separatist leader, Aslan Maskhadov, and his envoy, Akhmed Zakaev. Stanislav Dmitrievskii faces charges under Article 282, 1 ("Incitement of Enmity or Hatred, and Likewise Demeaning Human Dignity with regard to indicia of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude towards religion, and likewise affiliation to any social group, committed publicly or with the use of the mass media").

On 10 September the website of the Russian Chechen Information Agency of the RCFS was attacked by hackers. However, staff at the office in Nizhnii Novgorod were eventually able to retrieve lost data and the organization continues to provide information on the situation in Chechnya.

Background

Amnesty International has previously expressed concern about an apparent campaign of harassment and prosecution of members of the RCFS which seems to be in response to the organization's work on human rights. Since 2000, when the organization was officially registered, there have been a number of cases of torture and ill-treatment, "disappearances" and alleged extrajudicial executions of members of the RCFS in the North Caucasus. In 2005, the campaign has been widened to include a criminal investigation into articles published by the organization, checks by the tax authorities and moves by the Ministry of Justice to close down the organization. This has been combined with negative media coverage in Nizhnii Novgorod of the organization's activities, and editor Oksana Chelysheva was the subject of threatening leaflets in March 2005.

In June 2005 a Moscow regional court issued a ban on the National Bolshevik Party; the ban was revoked in August by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. The party has gained a lot of publicity for its protests against the government of the Russian Federation. Russian human rights organizations, while not siding with the political aims of the party, have

criticized the government's response to the party's reportedly peaceful protests. The Society of Russian Chechen Friendship has no links to the National Bolshevik Party.

Please continue to write letters on behalf of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society.

Send letters regarding the case of Stanislav Dmitrievski and Oksana Chelysheva, expressing concern for the safety of Stanislav Dmitrievskii, Oksana Chelysheva and their colleagues, urging the Russian authorities to:

- Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the threats against Stanislav Dmitrievskii and Oksana Chelysheva and make any findings public; and bring those responsible to justice;
- Condemn publicly any threats and attacks against human rights defenders by non-state actors;
- Respect the work of human rights defenders and ensure that they can carry out their legitimate work in safety and without fear of harassment or intimidation.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir PUTIN

Kreml, Moscow, Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 095 206 85 10 / 206 51 73 / 230 24 08 (if someone answers say "fax please")

Email: president@gov.ru

Salutation: Dear President Putin

Procurator General of the Russian Federation, Vladimir USTINOV

Ul. B. Dimitrovka 15a, 103793 Moscow K-31, Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 095 292 8848 / 921 4186 (if someone answers say "fax please")

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Procurator of Nizhegorodskii Region

Vladimir V. Demidov

Procuracy of Nizhegorodskii Region

Pl. Gorkogo 6

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Please send copies of your letter to the Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Volga Federal District (Privolzhskoi District), Sergei Vladilenovich Kirienko, by pasting them onto the website of the Representative:

<http://www.kirienko.ru/comm/form.phtml?id=711>