

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/torture/"disappearance"

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION
(Chechen Republic)**

Makhmud Magomadov (m), born 1954, human rights lawyer

Chechen human rights lawyer Makhmud Magomadov was reportedly seized by armed men in camouflage on 20 January, in the Chechen capital, Grozny. He has not been seen since, and Amnesty International believes he is in real danger of being tortured or killed.

According to reliable sources, Makhmud Magomadov had gone with his family to visit a friend who lives in the Staropromyslovskii district of Grozny near the "Elektropribor" electronics factory (a local landmark). They were followed the whole way by a metallic grey car. At 6.30pm Makhmud Magomadov had left his wife and six-month-old son in the car, and gone into the block of flats with his four-year-old daughter, Iman. At that moment several cars drove up to the building (Amnesty International has details of their colours and registration numbers), and at least 15 armed men in camouflage got out. They surrounded the building and brought Makhmud Magomadov out and took him away in a white Niva, registration number GAZ-31029, in the direction of the centre of Grozny. They would not say anything about what was going on.

Witnesses say the men were speaking in Chechen, and assume that they were from the armed group known as the *Kadyrovtsi*, which is under the command of Chechnya's First Deputy Prime Minister, Ramzan Kadyrov. Ramzan Kadyrov is the son of the Russian-installed Chechen President Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, who was assassinated in May 2004. Ramzan Kadyrov is in charge of a security service that is allegedly responsible for serious human rights violations such as "disappearances" in Chechnya.

Makhmud Magomadov works for the human rights organization Chechen Committee for National Salvation, researching and drafting cases of serious human rights violations in the course of the armed conflict in Chechnya, including torture, "disappearances", extrajudicial executions and the indiscriminate killing of civilians, for submission to the European Court of Human Rights. He has been working together with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, and the Russian NGOs International Protection Centre and the Movement for Human Rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fighting in Chechnya began in 1994, when Russian federal forces moved to crush an independence movement that had arisen since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This first conflict ended in 1996, but in late 1999 Russian federal forces attacked the region again after a series of bomb explosions in Moscow and two other Russian cities, which the Russian authorities blamed on Islamic separatist groups in Chechnya.

In spite of repeated claims from Russian and pro-Moscow Chechen officials that the situation is "normalizing", there seems to be no end in sight either to the conflict itself or to the accompanying human rights abuses. Throughout the armed conflict, the Russian Federation authorities have attempted to restrict the gathering and dissemination of information about the human rights situation in the North Caucasus. Human rights defenders and activists speaking out about the situation in the region, those investigating such abuses and those who have sought redress with the European Court of Human Rights have themselves increasingly become victims of serious human rights violations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of human rights lawyer Makhmud Magomadov, who was abducted by armed men in camouflage on 20 January, in the Staropromyslovskii district of Grozny;
- calling for a full, thorough and independent inquiry into allegations that the men who abducted him were members of the security forces under the command of First Deputy Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov;
- if he is in the custody of the security forces, urging the authorities to ensure that he is released immediately and unconditionally;
- calling on the authorities to end the persecution of human rights defenders and activists working in the North Caucasus.

APPEALS TO: (Fax machines may be switched off outside office hours – GMT+3)

President of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Vladimirovich PUTIN

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Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 095 206 85 10 / + 7 095 206 51 73 / + 7 095 230 24 08

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Salutation: Dear President Putin

Procurator General of the Russian Federation

Vladimir USTINOV

General Procuracy of the Russian Federation

Ul. B. Dimitrovka 15a

103793 Moscow K-31

Russian Federation

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

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Procurator of the Chechen Republic

Vladimir Pavlovich Kravchenko

Procuracy of the Chechen Republic

Ul. Garazhnaya 9 b

Grozny, Chechen Republic

Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 8712 22 31 43 (if someone answers say "fax please")

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Salutation: Dear Procurator

COPIES TO:

Vladimir Lukin, Ombudsman of the Russian Federation

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Ella Pamfilova, Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the Russian Federation

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Chechen Committee of National Salvation

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and to diplomatic representatives of the Russian Federation accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 March 2005.