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**RUSSIAN FEDERATION: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS FURTHER
TAKING OF HOSTAGES AND CALLS ON ALL PARTIES TO ENSURE THEIR
SAFETY**

Amnesty International today condemned the actions of the group of gunmen who seized a ferry in the Turkish port of Trabzon and threatened to blow up the vessel in the busy Bosphorus strait, allegedly under orders from Chechen commander Shamil Basayev.

The organization also condemned the actions of Chechen fighters who, in a separate incident this Tuesday, seized 30 more hostages at an electrical plant near the Chechen capital Grozny and took them to an unknown destination.

According to Amnesty International, both the Chechen forces and the Russian Government should ensure the safety of the remaining hostages in or outside of Pervomaiskoye and take all possible steps to avoid civilian casualties. The human rights organization also urges the Chechen fighters and their supporters in Turkey to release immediately all hostages unharmed.

Amnesty International is calling on all parties to the conflict to abide by the rules of war, which prohibit hostage taking.

The human rights organization has been greatly concerned the past three days about the plight of the hostages held by Chechen fighters in the village of Pervomaiskoye. Concern for the hostages' safety was heightened by reports of heavy artillery and Grad rocket attacks on the village by the Russian army, which appeared to signal its intention to end the hostage crisis by resorting to an indiscriminate attack.

At present, Amnesty International is looking for further clarification on the latest official statement by President Yeltsin saying that the Russian military attack on Pervomaiskoye ended and 82 hostages were freed.

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