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EXTERNAL -- for immediate release

**CHECHNYA: Only an international investigation will ensure justice for the victims**

*"The guards started beating us from the minute we entered the camp. There were about 20-25 men in masks in the camp's yard, standing in two lines and forming a live chain, something like a "human corridor". We were pushed through this "corridor" and each of the guards began hitting us with clubs. Then they ordered us to completely undress and we were forced into a freezer room, previously used for freezing meat. They kept us there naked for a while and then ordered us to dress up and get out. They began beating us again in the corridor outside the freezer. They continued beating us in the cell, too. During this first night in the camp I was beaten four times. The next day, we were forced to run through the live chain of armed guards in masks in the corridor in front of our cells. Some of the guards were armed with heavy hammers, the rest had clubs. When I ran through their "corridor", somebody hit me on the back with a hammer. The pain was so strong, that I was not even able to feel any pain during all the rest of the beatings with clubs..."*

*"Musa"\* , a survivor of the Chernokozovo "filtration camp"*

*"I lost consciousness two times during the interrogation. When I recovered they continued to apply two electric wires to different parts of my body. The guards found a box of painkillers in my pocket. I told them it is for my heart condition. Then they began beating me in the area of the heart. They hit me five or six times in the area of the heart."*

*"Mogamed"\* , a survivor of the Chernokozovo "filtration camp"*

Every day, even as the UN Commission on Human Rights meets in Geneva, victims such as "Musa" and "Mogamed" are suffering in secret. During Amnesty International's latest research mission to Ingushetia, a neighbouring republic of Chechnya, the organization has collected many testimonies from individuals, such as those above, which have confirmed that detainees in "filtration camps" – men, women and children – are routinely and systematically tortured: they are raped, beaten with hammers and clubs, tortured with electric shocks and tear gas, their teeth are sawn off and some are simultaneously beaten around both ears to burst the ear-drums. Detainees are beaten while being forced to run through "human corridors" formed by guards, as an initiation to the detention facility, or in order to get from the cell to the toilet. All survivors of "filtration camps" who spoke to Amnesty International said they had been threatened by the "filtration camp" authorities, on their release, that if they spoke out their families would be killed.

#### **Death in custody:**

A 14-year-old girl, originally from Urus-Martan, died in detention in Chernokozovo, allegedly as a result of being tortured and ill-treated, including being repeatedly raped, by the guards. She had reportedly been detained at a check-point while travelling on a bus. She was one of sixty women allegedly held together in cell number 25 in Chernokozovo, who were reportedly subjected to beatings by the guards. A pregnant woman held with them, "Zuliykhan"\*, in her seventh month of pregnancy, was reportedly not beaten by the guards, but they constantly threatened to torture her. "Zuliykhan" was subsequently released and gave birth prematurely.

#### **Secret "filtration camps":**

Amnesty International has collected information from survivors about the existence of secret "filtration camps" such as on the premises of a former school in the town of Urus-Martan, the so-called "Internat", and a makeshift detention facility in the village of Znamenskoye, allegedly located in the basement of a building situated behind the building of the local government. Other secret detention facilities reportedly exist: at the Russian army checkpoint in the village of Tolstoy-Yurt – it is apparently a pit dug in the ground; in the village of Gorogorsk, on the premises of a former oil factory (known as "NGDU"); and two detention facilities in the Leninsky district of Grozny, in the buildings of the car factory there (in buildings "PAP-1" and "PAP-5").

*“Sultan”\*, a 25-year-old man, died following release from detention in the “Internat” camp in Urus-Martan. According to his doctors, “Sultan” sustained serious bodily injuries in the area of the chest, the stomach, and all over his head. He also sustained several open wounds as a result of cuts with a bayonet on his neck and his back. His body was heavily bruised. “Sultan” died on 16 March after undergoing several operations. Amnesty International’s researcher has obtained a post-mortem medical certificate which includes a list of the various injuries sustained by “Sultan” at the moment of his hospitalization, and also concludes that he had received these injuries and bruises, leading to his death, as a direct result of beatings.*

*Outside the “filtration camps”, civilians are still not safe within Chechnya: villages have been attacked by artillery and rockets, yet civilians have been unable to flee – such as in Komsomolskoye at the beginning of the month. Even when civilians do manage to escape areas under attack, there are credible reports of Russian forces bombing directly civilian convoys marked with white flags. For example, on 20 February near the village of Duba-Yurt in Shatoysky district, cars (including two ambulances clearly marked with the red cross sign) carrying about 40 civilians to safety from the village of Barzoy came under direct artillery attack and three women and two men were killed, including a 75-year-old woman, Dogman Giriyeva, and up to 16 people were wounded. Civilians have also become victims of direct attacks by Russian forces even when “safe corridors” for them have been officially announced. On 20 March a group of up to sixty civilians, mostly women and children, who had been promised a “safe corridor” for a day to pick wild garlic in the nearby forest to eat, came under artillery attack near the village of Samashki. As a result, at least three women were killed and at least five women were wounded.*

*Hundreds of civilians are reported to have become victims of extra-judicial executions by Russian forces on the territory under their control, such as in the Staropromyslovsky district of Grozny in January, and in the suburb of Grozny, Aldi, in the Oktyabrsky district, in February. In other cities of the Russian Federation, such as Moscow, Amnesty International has recorded a pattern of persecution – including arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and torture in custody – of Chechens and people from the Caucasus.*

*The international community must act*

*“The UN Commission on Human Rights and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe must take the necessary steps to instigate an international investigation into the killing, torture, including rape, ill-treatment and persecution of the civilian population in Chechnya,” Amnesty International said today.*

*Russia’s newly elected president, Vladimir Putin, recently stated to the media that “democracy is the dictatorship of the law”. Amnesty International calls on President-elect Putin to show his commitment to the rule of law by fulfilling Russia’s international obligations, and cooperating with an international investigation by providing unfettered access to human rights monitors to all “filtration camps”, and inside Chechnya.*

*\*These are not real names. They have been changed for the individuals’ security.*

*ENDS.../*

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