

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 46/25/96

10 May 1996

**Further information on EXTRA 34/96 (EUR 46/13/96, 7 March 1996) and follow-ups (EUR 46/14/96, 12 March; EUR 46/16/96, 19 March; EUR 46/23/96, 23 April 1996; EUR 46/24/96, 1 May 1996) - Fear for safety / Possible extrajudicial executions / Fear of torture**

**CHECHEN REPUBLIC - RUSSIAN FEDERATION      Civilians under Russian bombardment**

**New concern:    Fear for safety of civilians in Urus Martan**

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of about 40,000 civilians in the Chechen town of Urus Martan, about 12 miles southwest of Grozny.

It was reported that on the night of 9 May 1996 Urus Martan came under attack with tank and mortar fire from Russian federal forces, similar to those launched against the towns of Shali, Sernovodsk and Samashki in March and April (as a result of which hundreds of civilians are believed to have been killed - see previous updates to this action). The attack on Urus Martan on the night of 9 May resulted in at least one person being injured.

It is feared that Urus Martan could come under further indiscriminate attacks from Russian forces which might result in deaths among the civilian population. There were no reports indicating that a humanitarian corridor to allow civilians to leave Urus Martan had been opened by the Russian forces prior to the attack.

Urus Martan is currently reported to be surrounded by Russian forces, whose commanders have refused to make contact with the local Chechen authorities. Magomet Gaisultanov, deputy head of the town's administration, was reported as saying that Russian troops had blockaded the town, telling him that they had been ordered to do this, but did not know why or how long the blockade would last.

According to Russian news reports of 8 May 1996, the pro-Moscow Chechen authorities had opened a criminal investigation into the Russian helicopter attack on Urus Martan in 1995 in which up to five civilians were killed and 21 wounded. It was also reported that Urus Martan has never opposed the Russian forces or the Chechen authorities in Grozny during the 17-month conflict in the Chechen Republic.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Russian or in your own language:**

- calling for all steps to be taken to ensure the safety of civilians in Urus Martan, and to uphold basic principles of international humanitarian law in particular as regards the protection of the civilian population;

- calling on the Russian Government to comply with its commitments on respect for human rights, given to the Council of Europe upon Russia's acceptance to the Council in February 1996, including the commitment to "respect strictly the provisions of international humanitarian law, including in cases of armed conflicts on its territory";

- urging the Russian Government to comply with its commitments to protect human rights in times of armed conflict, given to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), when Russia signed the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security in December 1994.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
g. Moskva  
Kreml  
Prezidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii  
Yeltsinu B.N.

**Faxes: +7095 206 5173**

**Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Yeltsinu**

**Salutation: Dear President**

President's Special Envoy in Chechnya, Oleg Lobov

**Faxes: +7095 206 0717**

**COPIES TO:**

Russian Federation Minister of Defence, General Pavel Grachev  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
103175 g. Moskva  
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Ministerstvo oborony  
Ministru Grachevu P.S.

and to diplomatic representatives of Chechen Republic - Russian Federation  
accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 June 1996.