
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 05/95

TO: PRESS OFFICERS
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICE
DATE: 6 JANUARY 1995

AI INDEX: NWS 11/05/95
DISTR: SC/PO
NO OF WORDS: 493

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL FOR RESPONSE - **RUSSIA (CHECHNYA)**

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Sudan - 25 January - SEE NEWS SERVICES 275 AND 261

Turkey - 8 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 261

Northern Iraq - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

AI INDEX: EUR 46/WU 01/95
6 JANUARY 1995

RUSSIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION INTO SHOOTINGS BY RUSSIAN TROOPS

Amnesty International is strongly urging the Russian Government to initiate a comprehensive, impartial investigation into the circumstances in which Russian troops reportedly shot dead 10 people, including four women, on 17 December 1994 in the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic-Ichkeriya.

Amnesty International has written to President Yeltsin, the Ministers of Defence and Interior and the head of the newly-created presidential commission set up to observe constitutional and human rights in the Chechen Republic-Ichkeriya.

The human rights organization is urging the authorities to ensure that the investigation into the deaths on 17 December is comprehensive and impartial; that the results are made public; and that any persons found responsible for violations are brought to justice within the bounds of international law.

According to one report a convoy of 10 vehicles, containing people seeking to flee the fighting, was passing through an army or Interior Ministry checkpoint near the border village of Nesterovskoye. Seven vehicles reportedly passed without incident, but troops opened fire at around 6pm on the last three cars. Survivors alleged that troops opened fire without warning on the cars, and continued firing on those seeking to escape.

Official Russian sources confirmed that a number of deaths took place after troops opened fire, but say that the shooting was in self-defence. Anatoly Safonov, first Deputy Director of the Federal Counter-Intelligence Service, reported that an investigation is under way into the incident.

On 19 December, Amnesty International urged László Kovács, the Chairman-in-Office of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) (now the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)) to appeal publicly to both sides in the conflict to respect and observe human rights -- both integral components of the CSCE standards.

On 5 January, the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE stated that he "condemns the serious violations of human rights in Chechnya", and called for a halt in military operations. Russian Federation officials invited the personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office to come to a meeting on 9 January in Moscow. The OSCE plans to meet on 12 January in Vienna to discuss the situation.

The self-proclaimed Chechen Republic-Ichkeriya declared independence in 1991, a move not recognized by Russia or internationally. Hundreds of

people, including many civilians, have reportedly died in the armed conflict which began after Russian troops entered the territory on 11 December.

Amnesty International, which takes no position on territorial disputes, has already approached both parties to the conflict urging them to protect non-combatants in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.