

# **Russian Federation**

## **Human rights memorandum to President Medvedev**

### **Introduction**

Following your inauguration as President of the Russian Federation, and your statements in support of personal freedoms and the rule of law, Amnesty International is taking this opportunity to present to you its key concerns relating to human rights in the Russian Federation.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at entrenched problems relating to human rights in Russia. There have been positive developments over the past several years, for example the reform of the criminal and criminal procedure codes, some improvement in prison conditions, prosecutions of some police officers for abuses amounting to torture, and also the moratorium on the death penalty has been maintained. Nevertheless, overall a number of serious patterns of violations persist and in some cases have worsened in recent years. Amnesty International has highlighted these issues in recent reports, and provided recommendations for action by the authorities.

Amnesty International believes that you, President Medvedev, should take action on the following issues, in accordance with the recommendations below, in order to achieve lasting, substantive improvements in terms of legislative, policy and administrative change.

### **Freedom of expression**

Amnesty International looks to you as the President of Russia to initiate a sea-change in direction in terms of freedom of expression in Russia. Upon becoming president of the Russian Federation you promised to protect and honour human rights and freedoms and to honour and protect the constitution of the Russian Federation.

In your speech following your inauguration you stated that human rights and freedoms are of the highest value to the Russian society and that they determine meaning and content to all state activity and in that context you considered it to be your most important task to further develop civil and economic freedoms. With great hopes Amnesty International looks forward to seeing this commitment made a reality. We urge you to ensure that the rights and freedoms, as enshrined in the Russian Constitution and in international human rights treaties Russia has ratified, will

become a reality for all people in the Russian Federation, no matter their ethnic origin, citizenship, political or religious belief or their sexual orientation.

Amnesty International considers it vital in this context to ensure the protection of the right to freedom of expression as one of the cornerstones for the overall protection of human rights. Without the ability to speak out against human rights violations, including during peaceful demonstrations, violation of basic human rights may go unnoticed and those who commit them may be able to do so with impunity. Recently the organization has been concerned about the shrinking space for expressing dissenting views, and for independent media and independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to operate throughout the Russian Federation. Laws have been introduced which have a stifling effect on civil society, such as the law on NGOs and the law to combat extremist activities.

Our concerns regarding the respect for freedom of expression in the Russian Federation are outlined in the report *Russian Federation: Freedom limited. The right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation* (AI Index: EUR 46/008/2008, 26 February 2008).

### **Freedom of association**

Amnesty International's analysis of the law on NGOs has shown that it is overly burdensome and may have been applied arbitrarily to interfere with the work of independent civil society organizations.

While only a limited number of NGOs had to be closed down following the introduction of the law on NGOs, many more had to devote a substantive amount of time to ensuring their documents are in line with the requirements of the law. Amnesty International has documented a number of cases where the requests made by the Federal Registration Service (FRS) to an NGO have been unjustified and may have violated the right to freedom of association.

Amnesty International therefore welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, which on 4 March 2008 confirmed an early decision of the Samara regional court not to close the Samara regional branch of the organization *Voice (Golos)*. The court found the allegations of the FRS, which had called for the closure of the NGO, unsubstantiated and did not find a violation of the NGO law in the activities of *Voice*, which trains election observers and informs the public about the right to free and fair elections.

However, Amnesty International, which together with several other Russian and international NGOs repeatedly addressed your predecessor about the negative impacts

the law has on civil society, continues to be concerned about the law and its implementing regulations.

Amnesty International urges you to actively promote freedom of expression. In particular the organization urges you to:

- Institute an urgent review of the NGO law and its implementation;
- Address the deficiencies in the NGO law and its implementing regulations so that the law enables the exercise of the right to freedom of association, including by ensuring that the FRS has clear instructions as to its powers during the implementation of the law;
- Actively engage with civil society organizations when reviewing the law, including by addressing suggestions brought forward by the Presidential Council on human rights and the development of civil society organizations;
- Ensure that the law to combat extremist activities is not used arbitrarily and that its implementation does not lead to the restriction of the right to freedom of expression where this is not absolutely necessary.

### **Freedom of assembly**

During demonstrations ahead of the Duma and presidential elections, the police used excessive force to disperse demonstrators. While there has been some official acknowledgment that the response towards the demonstrators was disproportionate, Amnesty International is not aware of any prosecution or disciplinary measure taken in relation to members of the law enforcement agencies in connection with the unlawful use of violence.

Amnesty International is also concerned that other groups who attempted to exercise their right to freedom of assembly have been prevented from doing so. In the last three years, a number of gay pride or gay rights marches have been banned by the Moscow authorities, without providing an alternative date or location as is required by Russian law. The explanation given by the Moscow authorities, that such a march would be opposed by a large part of the population, is not a valid reason in international law to ban a demonstration, as the right to freedom of assembly clearly extends to those who hold views not favoured by the majority of the population.

Amnesty International urges you to:

- Protect and promote the right to freedom of assembly, including of those who may wish to express dissenting views during peaceful demonstrations;

- Ensure that demonstrations of those who may hold minority views, such as gay pride marches, are allowed to go ahead in line with the law and that adequate policing is provided to ensure the participants' safety;
- Provide for law enforcement bodies to be instructed on how to police public meetings in line with Russian law and international human rights standards guaranteeing the rights to freedom of assembly and to physical integrity;
- Ensure that anyone reasonably responsible for the unlawful obstruction of the exercise of the right to freedom of assembly or for the ill-treatment of demonstrators will be brought to justice in a trial which meets international standards of fairness.

### **North Caucasus**

Amnesty International is concerned about human rights violations in the North Caucasus and that the Russian Federation authorities are not addressing the crisis in the North Caucasus effectively. Human rights violations such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture and arbitrary and secret detention continue to be reported in several regions of the North Caucasus, such as Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and North Ossetia, while impunity for these violations remains entrenched. Abuses are also committed by armed opposition groups including attacks on civilians, and abductions.

In Chechnya, fighting between Russian and Chechen security forces and armed groups has not ceased, and artillery attacks have been reported this year without warning in civilian areas in the south of the republic.

“Confessions” extracted under torture from those alleged to be members of armed groups have been used as evidence in trials in the North Caucasus which fail to meet international standards of fairness resulting in long-term imprisonment.

Human rights violations committed by law enforcement officials remain largely unpunished, not least because people who have become victims of a human rights abuse justifiably fear reprisals if they turn to the authorities for redress. Those from the region submitting cases to European Court of Human Rights also face intimidation and harassment.

The number of reported enforced disappearances in Chechnya has decreased, which is to be welcomed. At the same time there is an increasing number of reports of such human rights violations in Dagestan and Ingushetia. Moreover, in Chechnya thousands of individuals suspected of having been subjected to enforced disappearance remain unaccounted for. As far as is known to Amnesty International, only one person has been convicted in relation to a case of enforced disappearance and the fate of his

victim remains unknown. The investigation of mass graves lacks systematic procedures and adequate facilities. To Amnesty International's knowledge, no work is currently being done to identify and exhume mass graves, or to match bodies found with the descriptions of missing and disappeared persons given by their relatives.

*On 4 June 2005, security forces carried out a "special operation" in Borozdinovskaia, during which around 200 men were arbitrarily detained and ill-treated, at least one man was killed and 11 men disappeared. Around 100 members of the security forces arrived in Borozdinovskaia in two armoured personnel carriers, over 10 UAZ-469 jeeps and several VAZ-2109 vehicles. They were dressed in grey military and camouflage uniforms, and, according to villagers were ethnic Chechen members of the Vostok (East) battalion, a military intelligence unit under the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence. To this day, the fate of the 11 men remains unknown and Amnesty International is aware of only one prosecution of a law enforcement official, for "exceeding official authority", in connection with this incident.*

*Ibragim Gazdiev, who is an ethnic Ingush, was reportedly seized by armed men in camouflage, at 12.54pm on 8 August 2007 in Karabulak, in Ingushetia. He has not been seen or heard from since. The armed men were allegedly law enforcement officials from the Federal Security Service (FSB). According to unofficial information, Ibragim Gazdiev was transferred to a place of incommunicado detention in Ingushetia or in a neighbouring North Caucasus republic. The authorities, however, have denied that Ibragim Gazdiev was detained. The prosecutor's office has opened a criminal investigation into the case but has yet to uncover the fate and whereabouts of Ibragim Gazdiev or the identity of those who seized him.*

In Chechnya, the authorities have closed down temporary accommodation centres and forcibly evicted people from them. For example, 147 families of internally displaced people (IDPs) living in a temporary accommodation centre at 4, Vyborgskaia Street in the Chechen capital, Grozny, were reportedly told by officials on 10 January 2008 that they had to leave at short notice. Some were apparently told they had until the end of the month, but officials threatened to cut off the electricity and gas if they did not leave. The families included young children, elderly and disabled people, and they risked being forcibly evicted and being made homeless at a time when the temperature in Grozny falls below freezing at night. As of May, some of the families have been allocated alternative accommodation in private flats, but it has transpired that the ownership of many of these flats was disputed, leaving the families vulnerable to eviction.

Russia is failing to honour its obligations under international human rights law to respect and protect the right to life, freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, liberty and security of a person, fair trial and right to housing in the North Caucasus.

Amnesty International urges you to take all necessary steps to end the ongoing human rights violations and address the impunity with which they are committed in the North Caucasus. The following steps would, if implemented, be significant moves towards this goal:

- Condemn ongoing enforced disappearances, secret detention, torture and extra-judicial executions and end them immediately;
- Ensure that the numerous armed law enforcement agencies operating in Chechnya do so with clear jurisdiction and accountability, and that those agencies not authorized to carry out detentions are prevented from detaining individuals;
- Ensure that past violations are fully investigated and that those reasonably suspected of being responsible for human rights abuse are brought to justice in trials which meet international standards of fair trial;
- Fully implement all judgments of the European Court on Human Rights concerning the North Caucasus to ensure justice for the applicants, and non-repetition of the violations in the future;
- Ensure that prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all sites of mass graves in Chechnya are immediately carried out by forensic experts in line with UN guidelines on the disinterment and analysis of skeletal remains; making available adequate resources, including by establishing a morgue facility at the forensic laboratory in Grozny able to cope with large numbers of bodies at any time;
- Create a single authoritative and comprehensive database of the names and details of all individuals who have gone missing, who have been subjected to enforced disappearance, or abducted in Chechnya since 1999, and create a single official database logging details of all unidentified bodies found in Chechnya. Make both databases public and accessible to relatives of these people;
- Sign and ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

A more detailed analysis of the scale of the problem and the failure to adequately address these grave human rights violations can be found in the report: *Russian Federation: What justice for Chechnya's disappeared?* (AI Index: EUR 46/020/2007, 23 May 2007).

### **Human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers working in the North Caucasus**

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concern about the fate of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists working in the North Caucasus, many of whom in recent years have been subjected to threats, harassment, abuse and even on occasion serious human rights violations, such as enforced disappearance or extrajudicial executions.

*On 9 April 2006 Bulat Chilaev, a driver for the human rights organization Citizen's Assistance, was stopped near Sernovodsk, Chechen Republic, by armed, masked men in camouflage and together with his passenger, Aslan Izrailov, was taken away. He has not been seen since and no one has been brought to justice for the enforced disappearance of Bulat Chilaev and Aslan Izrailov.*

*In January 2004, Aslan Davletukaev, a member of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, was taken from his home by law enforcement officials. His mutilated body was found on 16 January near the town of Gudermes in Chechnya. No one has been brought to justice for the murder of Aslan Davletukaev.*

Such crimes have happened amidst a climate of growing suspicion against human rights defenders and civil society organizations, which have been repeatedly accused by government representatives of supporting extremism and working for foreign secret services. Such accusations have been made without any substantiation of the allegations. Journalists, who published information critical of government policies in the region, faced intimidation by law enforcement officials. During recent years - in an increasingly hostile environment for independent human rights defenders and journalists to operate - the law to combat extremist activities in connection with the NGO law has been used to further clamp down on independent civil society organizations.

*Amnesty International is concerned about the ongoing investigations against the human rights organization, the Chechen Committee for National Salvation. The organization, which monitors and reports about the situation in the North Caucasus, especially in Chechnya, is being accused of having issued press releases of an "extremist" character, designed to incite hatred between ethnic Chechens and people of other nationalities. Amnesty International has seen these press releases and does not consider them to be of "extremist" character. Several independent experts, including from the Russian Academy of Sciences, provided an analysis of the press releases and did not find them to be of extremist content either. In August 2007, the*

*NGO had to undergo a second review by the FRS in a year. In March 2008, during a court hearing into alleged violations of the NGO law, Ruslan Badalov, director of the NGO, was informed that he was under suspicion of being funded by foreign extremist organizations. These allegations were not further substantiated but opened the door to an investigation by the police department for organized crimes into the activities of the Chechen Committee for National Salvation. Amnesty International is concerned that the NGO may be targeted solely for exercising its right to freedom of expression and publicizing statements perceived to be critical of the authorities.*

Amnesty International published a report outlining its concerns regarding the situation of human rights defenders in the North Caucasus, *Russian Federation: Human rights defenders at risk in the North Caucasus* (AI Index: EUR 46/053/2007, 28 November 2007).

Amnesty International urges you to ensure that the following steps are being taken in order to ensure that human rights defenders and independent journalists can continue their lawful work in the North Caucasus unhindered:

- Respect and protect the right of human rights defenders and lawyers to conduct their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers;
- Ensure that the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are respected;
- Issue clear guidelines to law enforcement officials on the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association, in line with international standards;
- Officials should refrain from making threats, allegations and unsubstantiated accusations, including labelling human rights defenders who peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, as “terrorists” or “extremists”;
- Violations of the rights of journalists, human rights defenders and independent civil society activists should be investigated fully, promptly and impartially. Anyone found responsible for such violations should be brought to justice in a trial which meets international standards of fairness.



### **Violent racism**

We are aware of an increase in prosecutions recognizing racial hatred in cases of attacks, including fatal attacks on members of ethnic minorities or foreigners. At the same time, violent racist attacks continue to occur in Russia with alarming regularity. While some local initiatives have improved police response, Amnesty International is concerned that overall the authorities are still not doing enough to convincingly challenge racist and xenophobic ideas and ideologies, and have not implemented an effective programme to combat them and crimes committed arising out of them. For more information about Amnesty International's concerns, please see our report *Russian Federation: Violent racism out of control* (AI Index: EUR 46/022/2006).

Former President Vladimir Putin spoke out against extremism and in favour of multi-cultural Russia. Such statements are important, but more needs to be done.

Amnesty International urges you to:

- Speak out against racism and xenophobia and state clearly that racism and xenophobia will not be tolerated;
- Ensure that crimes which are reasonably believed to be racially motivated are classified, effectively and thoroughly investigated and prosecuted as such;
- Adopt a comprehensive government Plan of Action to combat racism and discrimination in all areas of Russian society, including among state officials. Civil society organizations should be involved in the development and implementation of the plan of action and adequate funding should be allocated;
- Ensure that those who incite racial hatred or hatred against a political, religious or social group will be brought to justice in line with Russia's obligations under international human rights law, while at the same time the right to freedom of expression is protected.

### **Torture in police custody**

Amnesty International is concerned about the many reports of alleged use of torture or other ill-treatment throughout the Russian Federation and the failure of the authorities to investigate such allegations and to bring those found responsible to justice.

Amnesty International receives credible reports about the alleged use of torture or other ill-treatment from regions across the Russian Federation. Alleged victims of such human rights violations have made claims that they were forced to "confess" to a crime under torture. We welcome that there have been a number of cases where those found responsible for the torture and ill-treatment of detained persons have been

brought to justice. However, Amnesty International is concerned that too often such crimes remain unpunished as allegations of torture are not investigated promptly, fully, independently and impartially. For more information about Amnesty International's concerns, please see our report *Russian Federation: Torture and forced "confessions" in detention* (AI Index: EUR 46/056/2006, 22 November 2006).

We note that a new structure, the Investigation Committee, was established within the office of the Prosecutor General in 2007, and was charged with responsibility for criminal investigations. It remains unclear to Amnesty International what impact this change will have, if any, in terms of the effectiveness of investigations into torture. In at least one case that Amnesty International is monitoring, that of Rasul Kudaev, the Investigative Committee has refused to open an investigation into his alleged torture or other ill-treatment. Rasul Kudaev has been charged with participation in the armed attack on Nalchik in October 2005 and was allegedly tortured and ill-treated during his arrest, and during the several days he was detained at the department of the Organized Crime Squad (UBOP) in Nalchik. Amnesty International has seen photographs, eyewitness testimony and official documents that provide evidence to support these allegations of torture.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has not been able to visit the Russian Federation due to the objections Russia has expressed about his terms of conditions for meeting and interviewing detainees. Amnesty International is concerned that the reasons given by the Russian government to prevent the visit of the Special Rapporteur are not based on Russian law, which would allow the Special Rapporteur to conduct his visit in line with his own mandate as well as in line with Russian law. Russia's stance is not befitting a member of the UN Human Rights Council, and Russia should be striving to cooperate fully with UN human rights mechanisms.

Former President Vladimir Putin expressed support for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which would establish a mechanism for unannounced inspections of all places of detention by credible impartial investigators. The implementation of the Optional Protocol is a vital instrument in seeking to prevent torture ever occurring.

Amnesty International urges you to take all necessary steps to ensure Russia fulfils its international obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and the UN, including by:

- Renewing the invitation to the Special Rapporteur on Torture under the usual terms of conditions of the Special Rapporteur;
- Signing and encouraging the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and establish a mechanism for unannounced inspections of all places of detention, including police custody and pre-trial

detention centres, by credible impartial investigators, whose findings should be made public;

- Authorizing the publication of all reports of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture;
- Ensuring that in line with Russia's obligations under Articles 2, 3 and 13 of the ECHR, the Investigative Committee develops standards for ensuring that investigations are independent, effective, thorough, prompt, and impartial, and that investigators are trained in how to investigate allegations of torture or other ill-treatment.

### ***Non-refoulement***

Amnesty International is concerned about the repeated instances of *refoulement*, that is, the deportation, extradition or otherwise forcible return of an individual to a country where he or she faces a high risk of being subjected to torture or other serious human rights violations.

Amnesty International has raised with the Prosecutor General's Office a number of cases where individuals have been *refouled* to Uzbekistan and China, usually by means of a deeply flawed procedure.

*Most recently, Abdugani Kamaliev was deported in December 2007 to Uzbekistan, despite an intervention of the European Court of Human Rights, which under rule 39 of the European Court had asked the Russian authorities not to deport or extradite him while it considered his application. According to information available to Amnesty International, Abdugani Kamaliev was tortured in Uzbekistan and in January 2008 was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment following a trial which did not meet international standards of fair trial.*

Amnesty International calls on you to:

- Guarantee that Russia honours its obligations under international human rights law and to ensure that all government authorities respect and facilitate, not hinder, all persons living on the territory of the Russian Federation to be able to fully enjoy their human rights;
- Ensure that refugees and other individuals, are protected from deportation, extradition or other forcible return to a country where they are at a real risk of serious human rights violations, such as torture or other ill-treatment or where they may face the death penalty;
- Ensure that independent and transparent investigations are opened into the circumstances surrounding all recent forcible returns executed in violation and

disregard of Russian law and international obligations, and any officials responsible for violations face appropriate sanctions.

### **Death penalty**

Amnesty International reiterates its call on the Russian Federation to abolish the death penalty in law and to ratify protocol No 6 of the ECHR. We recognize and welcome Russia's support for the worldwide moratorium on the death penalty. This encourages us to urge you as the President of the Russian Federation to:

- Impress on the parliament of the Russian Federation the need to fulfil Russia's international obligations which it took upon itself when joining the Council of Europe 12 years ago and to finally abolish the death penalty in law.

### **Fair trial concerns**

We note the admissions you have made that Russian courts are not truly independent of the executive and legislative branches. We welcome your stated aim to work towards eliminating corruption and executive pressure on judges, and for the courts to be independent. As an organization we have raised concerns that there are grounds for concern that criminal charges against some individuals have been politically motivated, and that in many cases international fair trial standards have not been met.

Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concern with the government of the Russian Federation regarding violations of the right to a fair trial of former head of the YUKOS oil company, Mikhail Khodorkovskii, and his associate Platon Lebedev. Both men are awaiting a second trial amidst fears that procedural violations may result in the trial failing to meet international standards of fair trial. Amnesty International has outlined its concerns in *Russian Federation: New trial of Mikhail Khodorkovskii and Platon Lebedev must meet international fair trial standards* (AI Index: EUR 46/052/2007, 7 December 2007).

*During recent months Amnesty International has campaigned for the protection of the human rights of Vasilii Aleksanian, a former lawyer and vice-president of YUKOS. Over a prolonged period of 17 months after he had been diagnosed with HIV,, Vasilii Aleksanian was denied necessary medical treatment while in pre-trial detention and most likely as a result of this his health has seriously deteriorated and he developed a number of AIDS-related illnesses. Amnesty International believes that the denial of medical treatment to Vasilii Aleksanian constituted cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and may have amounted to torture. In addition, according to him*

*and his lawyers, the conditions in which he was kept were unsanitary and may have amounted to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Vasilii Aleksanian was transferred to a hospital in February 2008 but remains under guard.*

Amnesty International also reiterates its call for a re-trial of Igor Sutiagin, a scientist who was sentenced in April 2004 to 15 years' imprisonment for alleged high treason. Amnesty International believes that the trial was marred by violations of the right to a fair trial. Igor Sutiagin is serving his sentence in a strict regime colony, with very limited access to receive private correspondence or visitors.

Amnesty International calls on you to:

- Respect the right to a fair trial in all cases without discrimination including by ensuring the independence of the courts from the executive and access to effective legal assistance for all in the criminal justice system in Russia;
- Ensure that the right to a fair trial of Mikhail Khodorkovskii and Platon Lebedev is fully respected;
- Provide all necessary medical treatment to Vasilii Aleksanian, and investigate the failure of the authorities to provide him with prompt and appropriate medical attention;
- Release Igor Sutiagin pending a re-trial.

### **Violence against women in the family**

Violence against women in the family remains widespread yet there are no clear official statistics on the issue, demonstrating a lack of prioritization of the issue. Government support for crisis centres and hotlines is totally inadequate; for the city of Moscow, with nine million inhabitants, there is not one single shelter for women fleeing a violent home. Shelters in other regions are not open to them if they do not have residential registration in that region. No measures under Russian law specifically address violence against women in the family. Amnesty International published a report on these issues, making specific recommendations to the Russian authorities: *Russian Federation. Nowhere to turn to. Violence against women in the Russian Federation* (AI Index: EUR 46/056/2008, 14 December 2005).

Amnesty International urges you to ensure your government:

- Enacts and enforces laws which recognize violence against women in the family as a distinct and serious crime;

- Encourages and enables cooperation between government bodies and NGOs to develop effective and sustainable mechanisms to protect women from violence in the family;
- Protects victims of violence against women in the family, providing access to shelters where they can be protected from abuse, and protects witnesses and others at risk during investigations and prosecutions from intimidation and reprisals;
- Ensures that access to shelters is un-bureaucratic and is not denied in a discriminatory way, based solely on the absence of registration in a particular place;
- Raises public awareness of violence against women in the Russian Federation and of the constructive action that the government will take to combat it.

### **Russia's influence internationally**

Russia should ensure it meets its human rights commitments as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council. This includes Russia fulfilling its commitment as a member of the international community by ensuring the protection of human rights in other countries as well as protecting human rights at home.

The Russian Federation played a decisive role in the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998 and stated that it “was a well-balanced compromise that would enable the Court to make a sizeable contribution to the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations” and that “it was essential to achieve universal recognition of the future Court” (cited in *“The International Criminal Court: The Making of the Rome Statute – Issues, Negotiations, Results”*, edited Roy S. Lee, Kluwer Law International, 2002). Amnesty International urges that the Russian Federation fulfil the commitment that it made to ratify the Rome Statute by its signature on 13 September 2000 so that it can participate in the Review Conference in 2010 and to consult civil society in a transparent process before submitting the draft implementing legislation which has been prepared to the Russian parliament, the Duma.

In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics Amnesty International highlights the plight of prisoners of conscience, including many activists and journalists in China, imprisoned because of their attempts to raise awareness about the human rights situation in China. Those who have linked the Olympics and human rights have been among the most harshly treated. In order to prevent a negative human rights legacy for the Beijing Olympics, Amnesty International calls on you as well as other world leaders, including those who plan to attend the Olympic Games, to use their influence with the Chinese authorities and to publicly express concern for human rights in China.

A list of concerns regarding the current human rights situation in China ahead of the Beijing Olympics can be found in *People's Republic of China: The Olympic Countdown. Crackdown on activists threatens Olympic legacy* (AI Index: ASA 17/050/2008, 1 April 2008).

Amnesty International urges you to:

- Ratify the Rome Statute so that Russia can participate in the Review Conference in 2010 and to consult civil society in a transparent process before submitting draft implementing legislation which has been prepared to the Russian parliament, the Duma;
- Call publicly for the release of prisoners of conscience and to end the harassment and intimidation of activists in China;
- Encourage publicly the Chinese authorities to take decisive steps to achieve its stated goal of abolition of the death penalty by publishing full national statistics on death sentences and executions and removing non-violent crimes from the scope of the death penalty.