

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: EUR 46/02/95
Distr: UA/SC

25 January 1995

Further information on UA 446/94 (EUR 46/03/94, 15 December 1994) - and follow-up: [EUR 46/01/95, 4 January 1995] - Appeal for the respect of humanitarian law

Russia:Parliament votes to introduce death penalty for "illegal armed formations"

On 20 January 1995 the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, voted to introduce a new article in the Criminal Code punishing "the organization of or participation in illegal armed formations". In its current wording the new Article 77-2 carries a sentence of up to eight years' imprisonment for such action, and a possible death sentence if this is accompanied by "mass violence, the death of people or other serious damage". Those fighting Russian troops introduced into the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic in December last year are frequently referred to by government sources as "illegal armed formations".

Before it can actually become law this amendment must be passed by the Federation Council, the upper house of parliament, and be signed by President Boris Yeltsin.

Amnesty International takes no position on territorial disputes. The organization's concern about this issue stems from its opposition to the death penalty in all cases, without reservation, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Amnesty International is urging deputies in the Federation Council, and President Yeltsin, to ensure that the use of the death penalty in Russia is not extended to this or any other laws.

The number of prisoners held by the Russian army or Ministry of the Interior in connection with conflict in the Chechen Republic is not known. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the organization mandated to work for the observance of humanitarian law, has sought access to prisoners and detainees held by both sides to the conflict. However, in spite of repeated requests to a number of officials, the ICRC reports that it has yet to receive permission to visit any prisoners held by the Russian side.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that all appropriate steps are taken to ensure that the use of the death penalty is not extended to the new law on "illegal armed formations", or to any other law, on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life;

- urging that the relevant Russian authorities take immediate steps to facilitate all appropriate access by the ICRC to prisoners held in connection with the conflict in the Chechen Republic.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin
Rossiskaya Federatsiya
g. Moskva
Kreml

Prezidentu Rossiskoy Federatsii Yetsinu B.N.

Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Yeltsinu

Faxes: + 095 206 51 73

Salutation: Dear President

Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation, Vladimir
Filippovich Shumeyko

Rossiskaya Federatsiya

g. Moskva

26 Bolshaya Mitrovka

Federalnoye sobraniye Rossiskoy Federatsii

Predsedatelyu Shumeyko V.F.

**Telegrams: Rossiya, Moskva, B. Mitrovka, Fed. Sob. RF, Predsedatelyu Shumeyko
V.F.**

Faxes: + 095 292 59 67

Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Ivan Petrovich Rybkin

Rossiskaya Federatsiya

103009 g. Moskva

Okhotny ryad 1

Gosudarstvennaya Duma Rossiskoy Federatsii

Predsedatelyu Rybkinu I.P.

Faxes: + 095 292 53 58

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrey Vladimirovich Kozyrev

Rossiskaya Federatsiya

129110 g. Moskva

Prospekt mira, 49a

Ministerstvo inostrannykh del

Ministru Kozyrevu A.V.

Faxes: + 095 230 24 08

Commissioner for Human Rights, Sergey Adamovich Kovalyov

Rossiskaya Federatsiya

103009 g. Moskva

Okhotny ryad 1

Upolnomochennomu po pravam cheloveka pri Gosudarstvennoy Dume Rossiskoy
Federatsii

Kovalyovu S.A.

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and to diplomatic representatives of Russia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 March 1995.