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Chechnya: The Council of Europe must act to stop further abuses
Amnesty International today called upon the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to take urgent action to prevent human rights violations in Chechnya. The Assembly meets tomorrow to evaluate Russia's progress on human rights in Chechnya.

"As a defender of human rights the Council of Europe has a responsibility to ensure that strong pressure is applied to Russia." Amnesty International said. "It has an obligation to remind the Russian authorities that no country is above the law."

Amnesty International has been collecting evidence of daily abuses in Chechnya. The organization has received information indicating that large numbers of people have been arbitrarily detained, with many held incommunicado. The organization also has evidence of summary executions and the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Amnesty International has compiled testimonies from victims of torture and from people who have been detained in "filtration camps" without access either to lawyers or to their families. Their testimony suggests that detainees in these camps have suffered systematic beatings with clubs and hammers, rape, electric shocks and subjection to tear gas. Detainees have also reported cases in which teeth were filed off.

Ethnic Chechens continue to be targeted by the Russian authorities, not only inside Chechnya but throughout the Russian Federation.

Despite Russian government assurances that all crimes against civilians will be investigated, the perpetrators remain unpunished. Neither of the bodies established by the Russian authorities – the National

Public Commission, or the Office of the Special Representative of the President on Human Rights and Freedoms in the Chechen Republic – have a mandate to undertake investigations.

Of all criminal cases reported by the Russian authorities to have been initiated against Russian servicemen, it appears that the vast majority are related to internal matters, such as bullying in the army, while human rights violations against civilians have prompted a mere 47 cases. Despite the Russian government's recent claim that up to 10 cases have reached court, Amnesty International is not aware of the specific nature of the charges because they have not been made public.

Amnesty International calls upon the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to:

- support the call for an international investigation into human rights abuses in Chechnya*
- demand that the Russian authorities review, as a matter of urgency, all cases in which ethnic Chechens have been convicted of possession of drugs and weapons on the basis of allegedly fabricated evidence. There are at least 50 such cases in Moscow alone.*
- demand that the Russian authorities stop the use of the mandatory residence permit requirement ("propiska"), often used as a tool for persecution and detention of ethnic Chechens and other people from the Caucasus.*
- demand that the Russian government is completely open in providing updates to the Assembly and to the public on investigations*

into crimes against civilians by servicemen or members of the special police forces.

· pressure the Russian government to account for crimes committed inside Chechnya and take immediate steps to demand accountability from the Russian authorities for the continuing persecution, discrimination, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in custody, and fabrication of criminal cases against Chechens elsewhere in the Russian Federation.

"While Amnesty International does not take a position on the question of membership of governments to international bodies, the Council of Europe has a duty to its own human rights standards," Amnesty International said. "The government of the Russian Federation has proved that it lacks the political will to investigate human rights abuses in Chechnya. It continues to reject the findings of independent human rights organizations on torture and ill-treatment. We are convinced that any domestic investigations into claims of human rights abuses will prove ineffective."

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