

**EXTERNAL**

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**EXTRA 19/96**

**Fear for safety**

**9 February 1996**

**CHECHEN REPUBLIC - RUSSIAN FEDERATION      Demonstrators in Grozny**

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Statements by the Moscow-backed Chechen government of Doku Zavgayev threatening to use force to disperse a peaceful demonstration in Grozny have raised fears for the safety of the protestors. The rally, attended by at least 500 people and held daily since 4 February 1996 in front of the presidential palace, is demanding the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya and the resignation of Doku Zavgayev's government.

It was reported on 7 February that a decision to break up the rally was taken at a meeting of officials of the local Chechen government. "At the session a decision was taken to liquidate the rally which is destabilising the political situation and public life in Chechnya", press reports quoted an unnamed source in the government as saying. According to the government source, the Chechen law enforcement bodies and units of the Russian armed forces would be involved in the operation.

On 8 February, Russian troops and Chechen police reportedly sealed off the central square in Grozny, where earlier in the day hundreds of demonstrators had erected barricades as a reaction to the threat of force made by the local Chechen government.

While Amnesty International takes no sides in territorial disputes during situations of conflict, it is calling on the relevant authorities to respect the right of its citizens to engage in peaceful assembly, as guaranteed under the Russian Constitution and international human rights standards, and to refrain from using force to break up the continuing demonstration in Grozny.

On 25 January 1996, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to accept the Russian Federation as a new member of the Council. Russia is expected to be officially accepted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at a ceremony in late February / early March 1996. In applying for membership of the Council of Europe, the Russian government has already committed itself to respect the human rights of all citizens of the Federation, especially in the context of the conflict in Chechnya.

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

- expressing concern at reports that the Chechen authorities have threatened to use force against peaceful demonstrators in Grozny;
- urging the authorities to respect the right of its citizens to engage in peaceful assembly and demonstration, as guaranteed under Article 31 of the Russian Constitution and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- urging the Russian government to comply with their commitments on respect for human rights given to the Council of Europe. (As a member of the Council of Europe, Russia is expected to sign the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which provides in Article 11 for the right to "freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others").

**APPEALS TO:**

1. President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin

Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
g. Moskva  
Kreml  
Presidentu Rossiyskoy Federatsii  
Yeltsinu B.N.

**Faxes: (7095) 206 5173**

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

**Salutation: Dear President**

2. Head of the Chechen Republic, Doku Zavgayev  
c/o Permanent Representative of the Chechen Republic with the President of  
the Russian Federation, Isa Aliroyev  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
g. Moskva

ul. Novy Arbat, 19, Komnata 725/729

**Faxes: (7095) 203 8939**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Zavgayev**

3. President's Special Envoy in Chechnya, Oleg Lobov

**Faxes: (7095) 206 0717**

**COPIES TO:**

Permanent Representative of the Chechen Republic with the President of the  
Russian Federation, Isa Aliroyev  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
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ul. Novy Arbat, 19, Komnata 725/729

**Faxes: (7095) 203 8939**

Russian Federation Minister of Internal Affairs, Col.-Gen. Anatoly Kulikov  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
117049 g. Moskva  
ul. Zhitnaya, 16  
Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del  
Rossiyskoy Federatsii  
Ministru Gen.-polk. Kulikovu A.

**Faxes: (7095) 230 2580**

Russian Federation Minister of Defence, General Pavel Grachev  
Rossiyskaya Federatsiya  
103175 g. Moskva  
ul. Myasnitskaya, 37  
Ministerstvo oborony  
Ministru Grachevu P.S.

**Faxes: (7095) 293 8398**

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 15 March 1996.