

11 June 1997

Further information on ua 123/97 (EUR 46/11/97, 29 April 1997) - Fear of further executions**CHECHEN REPUBLIC, RUSSIAN FEDERATION 27 people, names not known**

Amnesty International fears that 27 people, arrested on suspicion of kidnapping in the Chechen republic may face the death penalty after the President of Chechnya, Aslan Maskhadov urged the Shari'a courts to "*sentence those people to severe punishments*". President Maskhadov recently issued a decree which allows courts to sentence kidnappers to death.

A new Criminal Code recently developed in the Chechen Republic introduces the rules and regulations of the Islamic religious tradition, the Shari'a law, into the judicial practice of the Chechen republic. President Maskhadov made a statement on 8 June decreeing that from now on only Shari'a courts would function in the Chechen republic.

According to newspapers reports, the first public execution took place at the end of April, when Ibrahim, an ethnic Chechen from the settlement of Bachi-Yurt was publicly executed by having his throat slit by a group of hooded men, after having been found guilty of murder.

BACKGROUND :

In August 1996 a peace agreement ended the hostilities in the armed conflict in the Chechen republic, which began in 1991 when the Chechen Republic claimed its independence. Under this peace agreement the region's final political status has been deferred for five years, but the Chechen leadership has insisted upon Chechnya's independence from the Russian legal and governmental institutions, including the laws of the Russian Federation.

However, regardless of its current legal status, the Chechen republic still remains bound by the international human rights obligations of the Russian Federation, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. Amnesty International does not promote or oppose any particular system of justice, urging only that it conforms to internationally accepted standards.

Amnesty International is opposed to the death penalty in all cases and 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 as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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

- reaffirming your condemnation of the practice of kidnapping, expressing sympathy with the victims of these crimes but referring to the 1988 United Nations Study on the death penalty which concluded that the death penalty is not an effective deterrent for violent crime;
- regretting President Maskhadov's comments allowing people convicted of kidnapping to be sentenced to death, and urging him to amend all articles in the Criminal Code which provide for the death penalty, and replace them with punishments which do not violate international human rights standards;
- urging the authorities to abolish the death penalty and grant clemency to all those sentenced to death;

- urging the Chechen authorities to ensure that all people accused of crimes punishable by death have unhindered access to a defence lawyer of their own choice, and that they are allowed to appeal against the sentence to a court of higher jurisdiction.

APPEALS TO:

The President of the Chechen Republic, Aslan Maskhadov

Russian Federation

Chechenskaya Respublika Ichkeriya

Grozny

Administratsiya Presidenta

Prezidentu Maskhadovu

Telegrams: Rossiskaya Federatsiya, Chechenskaya Respublika Ichkeriya, Chechnya, Prezidentu

Salutation: Dear President

The Representative of the Chechen Republic in Moscow, Vakha Khasanov

Russian Federation

Moskva 121002

Denezhny pereulok d.12

Predstavitelstvo Chechenskoy respubliki Ichkeriya

Chrezvychainomu i Polnomochnemu Predstavitel'yu Chechenskoy respubliki

Ichkeriya v Rossiskoy Respubliki

Khasanovu V.

Telegrams: Rossiskaya, Moskva 121002, Predstavitelu Chechenskoy Respubliki Ichkeriya Khasanovu

Fax: +7 095 241 73 80

Salutation: Dear Predstavitel

NO COPIES

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 July 1997.