

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 46/013/2009

26 June 2009

UA 170/09

Enforced disappearance/Torture and other ill-treatment/fear for life

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Maskhud Abdullaev, (m), 22

Maskhud Abdullaev, a Russian national from Chechnya was forcibly returned by the Egyptian authorities on 19 June, to the Russian capital Moscow. Upon arrival at the airport in Moscow Maskhud Abdullaev was allegedly detained by men in plain clothes and taken for questioning. Maskhud Abdullaev has not been seen since. Several people waited for him in the arrivals hall until the 20 June.

Efforts to find out what has happened to him have so far been unsuccessful. Initially the border guards denied that he had been detained. Law enforcements officials were quoted in Russian media on 20 June, as saying they had detained him as they 'had questions regarding his stay in Egypt'. They also stated that they had detained him but had released him later. Maskhud Abdullaev has not contacted his relatives and his whereabouts remain unknown.

Maskhud Abdullaev is the son Supyan Abdullaev, the leader of a Chechen armed group. There are grounds to believe that he could have been detained by security services with the purpose to put pressure on his father. If so, Maskhud Abdullaev is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and there are fears for his life.

Maskhud Abdullaev's family left Chechnya in 1999 and the family obtained refugee status in Azerbaijan. Maskhud Abdullaev travelled to Egypt in February 2006 to study at Al-Azhar Islamic University. He was arrested for allegedly violating the terms of his visa on 27 May 2009, by Egyptian State Security Investigations (SSI) officers, and was then detained incommunicado in Tora prison near Cairo.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 27 May 2009, the Egyptian SSI conducted waves of arrests among foreign students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Among those arrested were about 35 Russian students, mainly from Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan. The students were arrested and their residences were searched without warrants. A statement from the Egyptian Ministry of Interior claimed the steps were taken as precautionary measures to ensure that the students were legally resident in Egypt. The Ministry conducted the arrests as it suspected that foreign students might have links with a group of seven al-Qaeda suspects that are under investigation for the bomb attack at al-Husayn historical district of Cairo, on 22 February 2009. The arrests of the seven suspects was announced by the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior on 23 May 2009. The Ministry of the Interior said the seven individuals who had been arrested had been recruiting foreigners, including students.

Most of the arrested students were released within days but some of them were reportedly deported to their home countries. Other students might still be in detention for investigation.

Amnesty International regularly receives reports from Chechnya about the targeting of relatives of those suspected of being members of armed groups. The pressure exerted on relatives has included intimidation, arbitrary detention, forced eviction and destruction of houses. In August 2008, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov announced on television that "those families whose relatives are in the forest are accomplices in crime. They are terrorists, extremists." Trials of suspected armed opposition members have been marred by violations of international fair trial standards. In particular, people being charged with and convicted of terrorism-related offences, based on forced confessions and testimony extracted under torture.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Russian, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Maskhud Abdullaev, who was reportedly detained upon his arrival at Domodedovo airport in Moscow and has not been seen since;
- expressing concern that Maskhud Abdullaev has been arbitrarily detained and is being held incommunicado where he is at risk of being tortured and suffering other ill-treatment;
- urging the Russian authorities that he be released immediately and unconditionally if he is not to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence, in line with internationally recognized standards of fair trial;
- reminding the Russian authorities that Maskhud Abdullaev should be accorded the full protection of Russian and international law, including immediate access to a lawyer of his choice and for his relatives to be informed of his whereabouts.

APPEALS TO:

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yuri Yakovlevich CHAIKA

Office of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

ul. B. Dimitrovka, 15a

125993 Moscow, GSP-3, Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 495 692 17 25

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Director of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

Alexandr Vasilevich BORTNIKOV

Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

ul. Bolshaia Lubyanka, 1/3

107031 Moscow, Russian Federation

Fax: +7 495 914 26 32

Salutation: Dear Director

Head of the Federal Border Service Department at Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Egorovich PRONICHEV

Federal Border Service Department at Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

ul. Bolshaia Lubyanka, 1/3

107031 Moscow, Russian Federation

Fax: +7 495 914 26 32

Salutation: Dear Head of the Department

COPIES TO:

Ombudsperson for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Petrovich LUKIN

ul. Miasnitskaia, 47

107084 Moscow

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 495 607 74 70; +7 495 607 39 77

Salutation: Dear Ombudsman

and to diplomatic representatives of Russian Federation accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 August.