

# **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

## **Chechen Republic: Renewed conflict**

### *The Chechen conflict: impunity and continuing crimes against civilians*

Both parties to the conflict in Chechnya continued to commit serious abuses of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law. Russian forces were responsible for the overwhelming majority of physical harm and material damage suffered by civilians. AI and other international and Russian human rights organizations active in the region continued to document violations by Russian forces, including: arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, “disappearance” and extrajudicial and summary execution of detainees, and the use of unofficial and secret detention sites. Chechen fighters violated humanitarian law by failing to protect civilian immunity during attacks on Russian positions, by attacking civilians who work in the local administration in Chechnya, and by ill-treating and extrajudicially executing Russian soldiers they have captured.

During “cleansing operations” (in Russian, *zachistka*) in towns and villages, Russian forces continued to arbitrarily arrest and use disproportionate force against civilians. Most people who were detained during such operations are reportedly beaten or subjected to torture while held in incommunicado detention; bribes are almost always extorted from relatives in exchange for their release. Hundreds of others simply “disappear” in custody. The mutilated corpses of some of the “disappeared” and of many other, unidentified individuals have been discovered in more than a dozen dumping grounds throughout Chechnya.

Federal authorities in Russia are not committed to a meaningful accountability process. Criminal investigations into abuses by military and police forces in Chechnya have been shoddy, ineffective, and incomplete. The federal government has not committed the necessary resources to investigations, nor are they empowering the relevant agencies to conduct them. Nowhere is the failure to investigate more obvious than in the case of Dachny village, where at least 51 bodies were found since January. No autopsies were performed on the corpses, and the authorities have rushed to bury, rather than preserve for the purposes of further investigations, those corpses that have not yet been identified.

Non-governmental organizations and independent journalists continued to face significant obstacles to gaining access to Chechnya and to carrying out their work there. *Alleged violations against Chechen civilians during “cleansing operations” by Russian forces.*

### *Reports from Kurchaloy district*

It was reported that following several attacks on members of the Russian federal forces, on several occasions in May and June, Russian soldiers arbitrarily arrested civilians in the Kurchaloy District in Chechnya. It was reported that on the morning of 12 May members of the Russian federal forces went into the house of Khamdi Gerikhanov and shot him and his 19-year old son dead. The soldiers allegedly detained three other Chechen men, Khamsat Gerikhanov, Ilyas Gerikhanov and Abubakar Umarov,

forced them out of the house and severely beat them.

According to witness reports given to members of the Russian human rights group, *Memorial*, on 16 June about 120 men were detained in Kurchaloy by Russian troops. On 21 June local inhabitants found the bodies of five of the men detained on 16 June, on the outskirts of the village. The local people reportedly identified all five men as: Khasan Chimaev, Vakha Magomadov (who also worked in the district administration), Khanpasha Khisriev, Ibragim Magomed-Salikh Dokhtukaev and Magomed-Emin Dokhtukaev.

According to reports, on 1 June between 20 and 30 men were detained by Russian forces in the village of Mayrtup in Kurchaloy District. Reportedly eight men were taken to the outskirts of the village and beaten by the military, who also ordered trained dogs to attack the detainees. Four of these men were then taken to the military base of the Russian troops. Five days later two of them were released, while the whereabouts of two others named as Said-Khasan Salamov and Said Magomed Bakhaev, remained unknown. Said Magomed Bakhaev reportedly lost consciousness as a result of the beatings and was taken to the Russian military base in critical condition. He was later allegedly transferred to an unknown place of detention.

### *Reports from the village of Chernorechye*

Reportedly during a “cleansing operation” Russian soldiers surrounded the village of Chernorechye on 28 June and began entering the houses. The Russian federal forces allegedly detained about 200 males including boys as young as 14, and took them by car to a dispensary near the water reservoir of the capital Grozny. On the way to the dispensary the soldiers pulled the shirts of the detainees over their heads as makeshift blindfolds, and allegedly beat them. Witnesses told members of *Memorial*, that the soldiers threatened to kill the detainees.

The detainees allegedly suffered beatings, electric shocks and cigarette burns on their bodies. Among those alleging ill-treatment were “Magomed”<sup>1</sup> and his cousin “Ruslan”<sup>2</sup> from the village of Chernorechye. “Magomed” claimed that they were kept in a very small room and from there taken to another room for interrogations. He also claimed that he saw his cousin return from such interrogations with his face bruised black from the beatings. “Magomed” describe how electric wires were tied to his right hand and his left thumb. He was then subjected to electric shocks. The Russian officers allegedly wanted him to provide them with information about Chechen fighters. “Magomed” claimed that he was interrogated three times. His cousin spent the night in a room with 12 other people. Allegedly one of the men in this room, who spoke up

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<sup>1</sup> Not their real names

against the soldiers, was shot in his leg. He reportedly lost consciousness and was taken out of the room and his name and fate remained unknown. "Magomed" also claimed that he saw two young women detainees at the dispensary during his detention. One of them was pregnant but miscarried.

### *Reports from the town of Sernovodsk*

On 2 July Russian federal forces during a "cleansing operation" reportedly detained several hundred inhabitants of Sernovodsk, a town close to the border with Ingushetia. Soldiers also allegedly looted houses destroying some of them with grenades. The soldiers allegedly told the local Chechens, that they would "wipe the village off the face of the earth". The detainees, who could not pay a ransom for their release, were taken to a nearby field and questioned about their affiliation with Chechen fighters or Islamic groups. According to reports, the Chechens were blindfolded and were ordered to lay down on the ground. Among the detainees were at least two women and several children, as well as a 90-year-old man. The detainees were allegedly beaten, some of them were subjected to electric shock and were bitten by trained dogs, who belonged to the federal forces. Most of these people were released during the night, but about a hundred people were taken to a temporary detention place in the town of Achkhoy-Martan. Among the people, who were beaten and tortured with electric shock were: Vakha Susurkaev, Alikhan Basaev, Islam Eldiev, Ruslan Yasakov, Visingira Madaev, Magomed Altamirov and Visingira Madaev who claimed he was also attacked by dogs. It was reported that Salambek Amagov was beaten until he lost consciousness and suffered serious injuries to his kidneys and liver. On 3 July most of the detained people from Sernovodsk were taken to a near-by forest and released. The whereabouts of the following people remained unknown: Apti Isigov, Zelimkhan Umakhanov, the Bataev brothers, the Musaev brothers. Relatives of these men reportedly went to different military bases and tried to obtain information about their whereabouts, but the Russian federal forces denied any responsibility for the detention of these men.

### *Reports from the village of Assinovskaya*

On 3 July, after an armoured carrier had been blown up near Assinovskaya, Russian soldiers started another "cleansing operation" in that village. They allegedly destroyed the possessions of the inhabitants, destroyed the local hospital and the school and detained between 200 and 300 local people. The detainees were taken to a field outside the village and reportedly questioned, while being subjected to beatings. The detainees were allegedly blindfolded with their own clothes and were ordered to lay on the ground for several hours, during which time they were repeatedly beaten by Russian troops. Some of the men were then taken to a forest near Chemulga where they were released. However, the men spent more than a day in the forest out of fear for mines and attacks by other units of the Russian army.

**Killing in Serzhen-Yurt**

**Russian soldiers came to the village of Serzhen-Yurt near Shali on 7 July. They entered the backyard of a house, where among other Chechens, a man was living who was not registered properly. Reportedly, when he tried to run away, the soldiers shot at him and injured his shoulder slightly. He was then taken away by the soldiers and allegedly his dead body was given back to the family two days later. Reportedly the body had marks of beatings. One of the ears was cut off and sewed to the trunk again.**

**On 20 July again soldiers came to the village and rounded up the men. One man, who tried to run away was allegedly shot in the knee. Eyewitnesses reported that the wound was not serious. Allegedly the soldiers insisted on taking the man to a military hospital. The following day the soldiers reportedly dumped the dead body near the village. The body had marks of beatings and bites of dogs.**