

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION
(CHECHEN REPUBLIC)**

**Ruslan Susaev (m), human rights defender
His family**

Human rights defender Ruslan Susaev has reportedly been harassed and assaulted by police, and Amnesty International believes that he and his family are in grave danger of serious human rights violations.

Ruslan Susaev is the head of the organisation "Civilians' Protest". He also assists the Information Centre of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society in Chechnya. According to reports on 4 November he and his wife, Susanna Susaeva, were reportedly stopped at a police roadblock near the Chechen town of Achkoi Martan. The police ordered them out of the car, threw Ruslan Susaev to the ground and searched him. They took the couple to the police station in Achkoi Martan, and later to the Sunzhenskii Regional Department of Internal Affairs (ROVD). The police allegedly tried to make Ruslan Susaev confess to a crime he had not committed, and told him that his family would suffer if he did not sign a confession. He refused to sign, and he and his wife were released the next morning, but he is very concerned that the security forces may now attack his sons or his mother.

Ruslan Susaev had reportedly collected information about a 27 August raid by the so-called *Kadyrovtsy*, members of the Chechen Ministry of Interior security forces, on a house in the town of Sernovodsk. During this raid several people were allegedly beaten up, one man was killed and another reportedly "disappeared" after the security forces took him away. Ruslan Susaev took part in a demonstration calling for the man to be released, and told other human rights activists about this event. He has allegedly been harassed and ill-treated by the police several times since then.

The day after the raid several masked men in uniforms of the security forces stormed the house where Ruslan Susaev was living with his family. The men forced two of the children to lie on the floor, asked where Ruslan Susaev was, fired in the air, searched the house and hit Ruslan Susaev's mother in the face. The men left but, according to Susanna Susaeva, the next day more men came to the house, looking for Ruslan Susaev. This time they took two of the couple's sons with them to a police station in Grozny. The boys were released a couple of hours later. That evening, a car without number plates reportedly stopped in front of the Susaevs' house. Neighbours saw three men in camouflage get out of the car and go into the house; these men reportedly threatened to torture Ruslan Susaev if he did not stop his human rights work. After these incidents, the owner of the house told the family to leave. Since then the Susaevs have been moving from place to place in Chechnya and the neighbouring republic of Ingushetia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has documented reports that several members of the Society of Russian-Chechen Friendship have been targeted by Russian federal and Chechen armed forces in Chechnya on a number of occasions. The head of the Society's information centre in the North Caucasus, Imran Ezhev, has been detained more than a dozen times in the course of the last five years.

Several other members of the Society of Russian-Chechen Friendship have been killed, allegedly by Russian forces, in what appears to be a deliberate campaign to target human rights activists. Most recently, on 16 January 2004, the mutilated body of human rights activist Aslan Davletukaev was found near the town of Gudermes in Chechnya. He had been working with the Society, and had reportedly been kidnapped by Russian federal forces on 10 January. Criminal investigations into these incidents have been inconclusive and no one has been held responsible. In August 2004 the investigations were closed.

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

- expressing concern about allegations that Ruslan Susaev and his family have been harassed and assaulted, and expressing concern for their safety;
- urging the authorities to ensure that state officials at every level of the state apparatus, including law enforcement officials, respect the legitimacy of the work of human rights defenders and allow them to carry out their work without hindrance or harassment;
- urging the authorities to prevent any further reprisals against Ruslan Susaev, his family and his colleagues from the Society for Russian-Chechen Friendship.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Vladimirovich PUTIN

g. Moskva, Kreml

Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 095 206 85 10

+ 7 095 206 51 73

+ 7 095 230 24 08

E-mail: president@gov.ru

Salutation: Dear President Putin

Procurator General of the Russian Federation

Vladimir USTINOV

General Procuracy of the Russian Federation

Ul. B. Dimitrovka 15a

103793 Moscow K-31

Russian Federation

Fax: + 7 095 292 8848 (if someone answers say "fax please")

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Vladimir Lukin

Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

Ul. Miasnitskaia, 47

Moscow, 103084

Russian Federation

Faxes: (+7) 095 207 39 77

E-mail: press-sl@ropnet.ru

(via website) <http://ombudsman.gov.ru>

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 January 2005.