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Russian Federation: Torture and ill-treatment in the Chechen Republic

Amnesty International welcomes the unprecedented move of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) to issue a second public statement in two years concerning the same issue - human rights abuses in the Chechen Republic.

In the statement of 10 July 2003 the CPT assessed that there is a continued resort to torture and other forms of ill-treatment by members of the law enforcement agencies and federal forces operating in the Chechen Republic, and that action taken to bring to justice those responsible has proved largely unproductive.

"The CPT has sent a clear and unequivocal message to the Russian authorities to make a formal commitment to end human rights violations such as torture, ill-treatment and 'disappearances' committed by law enforcement officials in the Chechen Republic, and to bring to justice those responsible for such abuses," the human rights organization said.

In its statement, the CPT identified measures needed to be taken by the Russian Federation authorities. They include a formal statement from the highest political level denouncing ill-treatment by members of the federal forces and law enforcement agencies in the Chechen Republic.

Amnesty International calls upon the Russian authorities to act promptly upon the recommendations suggested in the public statement of the CPT, and take immediate steps to ensure that law enforcement agencies and security forces respect human rights at all times. The Russian authorities must also ensure that those who will violate these rights will be made to answer in a court of law.

"Amnesty International recently welcomed the decision of the Russian government to authorize the publication of one of the CPT reports following its visits to the Russian Federation. We hope that the Russian authorities will continue their cooperation with the Committee and fulfil their commitment to respect the dignity and humanity of people deprived of their liberty in the Russian Federation," the organization added.

The organization strongly urges the Russian government to:

- Take all necessary measures to implement all CPT's recommendations without delay;
- Make public the reports of all the CPT's visits to the Russian Federation;
- Inform the public about measures it is taking to implement the CPT's recommendations.

Background

It is only on exceptional occasions that the CPT releases public statements regarding its concerns in a particular country. The lack of response to its recommendations relating to the Chechen Republic from the Russian government first prompted the CPT to take this exceptional step in relation to the Russian Federation in July 2001. That statement expressed the CPT's concern about the impasse it had reached with the Russian Federation on two issues, namely the carrying out of a thorough and independent inquiry into events in a detention facility at Chernokozovo detention centre during the period December 1999 to early February 2000, following information strongly indicating that many detainees had been ill-treated; and action taken to uncover and prosecute cases of ill-treatment of detainees in the Chechen Republic during the current conflict. CPT delegations have so far made 11 visits to different regions of the country. Six of these visits, including the last one between 23 and 29 May 2003, have been to the Chechen Republic.

The Russian Federation became a party to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1998. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), established by the Convention, is comprised of independent and impartial experts, whose visits and recommendations aim to protect detainees from torture, cruel and inhuman treatment. The reports of CPT visits and recommendations are confidential: they can be published only with the consent of the government in question.

The Russian Federation was the last of the states parties to the European Convention Against Torture to authorize the publication of one of the CPT's reports. (EUR 46/059/2003)

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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