

Will the UN Commission on Human Rights Ignore Chechnya, the Worst Human Rights Crisis in Europe?

Release of a new report by the IHF "Chechnya: More of the Same. Extrajudicial killings, Enforced "Disappearances", Illegal Arrests, Torture"

Vienna, Geneva, 30 March 2005. During the current session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) and the International League for Human Rights (ILHR) called the armed conflict in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation "undoubtedly the worst human rights and humanitarian crisis in Europe". In their joint statement for the Commission the human rights groups urged:

"... all members of this Commission who still believe that civilians in Chechnya should enjoy the same protection against torture and other massive human rights violations as individuals in other parts of the world, to table a resolution before the deadline of 11 April."

They recalled the demands made upon the Russian Federation in 2001, when a resolution was last adopted by the Human Rights Commission on the catastrophic human rights situation in the Chechen Republic, and stressed that:

"... given the nearly total absence of compliance of the Russian authorities with this resolution, and in reason of the failure by the Commission to adopt resolutions in the three years that followed, our organisations find it very disturbing that no resolution has been tabled this year on the situation in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation during the session under item 9."

At a briefing entitled "Human Rights Abuses in Chechnya: No End in Sight" - organised in the framework of the 61st session of the UN Commission on Human Rights by the IHF, the ILHR and the FIDH - the IHF released its new report on the human rights situation in Chechnya. The report is based on findings of field missions carried out between November 2004 and January 2005.

The 33-page report documents cases of "disappearances", extrajudicial killings, illegal arrests and torture, which clearly illustrates the pattern of never ending violations of HR in Chechnya, to which the international community has failed to provide an adequate response.

The report calls upon the intergovernmental organisations and their member-states to urge the Government of the Russian Federation to take additional measures to eliminate the climate of impunity prevailing in the Chechen Republic, including

- by vigorously investigating and prosecuting all violations of human rights,
- by sending a clear signal from the highest political level that all security and law enforcement officials must respect human rights in the execution of their duties,
- by providing reparation, including compensation, to victims of human rights abuses,
- by enabling systematic monitoring by national and international human rights organisations of human rights violations,
- by fully co-operating with all Council of Europe and UN mechanisms, in particular with the Committee for the Prevention of Torture, and the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Commission, and
- by facilitating access to the region by the national and international news media.

Finally, the IHF urges all national governments that still believe that civilians in Chechnya should enjoy the same protection against torture and other massive human rights violations as individuals in other parts of the world, to call for the establishment of a broad-based and independent commission of inquiry into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Chechen Republic.

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