

## FROM THE CONFLICT ZONE

### BULLETIN OF HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER "MEMORIAL"

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*(the issue prepared by HRC "Memorial" in Nazran)*

*Dear colleagues,*

Human Rights Center "Memorial" in Nazran offers its ensuing information bulletin based on the results of monitoring the human rights situation in the Chechen and Ingush Republics and Republic North Ossetia-Alania.

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### **I. Beslan: the Hostage-Taking at the School**

*On 1, 2 and 3 September 2004 monitors of the Human Rights Centre 'Memorial' were present in Beslan (Republic of North Ossetia-Alania). The following is short version of their account based on observations and interviews of the released hostages*

On the morning of 1 September 2004 at School ? 1 in Beslan the parade to celebrate Learning Day was due to take place at 10 a.m. The pupils and their families gathered in the yard to await the start of the ceremony. Everyone was in festive mood, thus, when armed masked men burst into the schoolyard many at first thought that it was a prize-draw, and assumed the shooting was the sound of bursting balloons. When it became clear within a few minutes that this was no joke, the parents and children attempted to flee. Some managed to escape, but the majority were herded into the school building by the terrorists.

The terrorists allocated the hostages around the school buildings in the gym and the classrooms. The bulk of the children and their parents were in the gym. So many people were herded in there that everyone had to sit on the wooden floor with their legs drawn in, 3-4 persons per square meter. It was not possible to lie down or move around the hall.

During the first 24 hours the hostages were allowed to drink. Household buckets for washing the floor were filled with water from the tap and enamel mugs were used to allow the children to drink. On the Thursday and the Friday water was not allowed. According to several of those questioned, the children were made to urinate on their clothes and suck the urine. Alan Tsgoev related to "Memorial" monitors that he ate the leaves of a houseplant which happened to be nearby.

As it was very hot and stuffy in the gym almost all the children were made to undress down to their underclothes. According to Zemfira Hodova, who was released on 2 September, on the first day the gunmen did not mistreat the hostages. Towards the end of the second day they began to get noticeably more nervous, and were shouting and shooting into the air.

Information differs regarding the total number of terrorists who seized the school. The hostages gave figures ranging from 16 to 40. There were two women amongst them (all those questioned confirmed that there were two), dressed in dark long dresses with "belts of shakhid". According to one of the female hostages, the women looked very young – 17 or 18 years old. Some of the men hid their faces with masks. According to the released hostages, the terrorists were of various ethnic origins included Ingush, Chechens, Ossetians and

Russians. The gym was usually guarded by 2 or 3 people, while the remaining terrorists were in other parts of the school.

According to the hostages, the gym was mined around its entire edge. Explosive devices were attached to wires slung across the entire length of the hall from one basketball goal to the other.

The terrorists virtually did not communicate with the hostages. This was extremely stressful for the adults: they had no idea what demands had been made, were unable to calculate the chances of a positive outcome to the negotiations – their fate was being decided independently of them.

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Meanwhile the relatives of the hostages were gathered on the square by the town Palace of Culture, approximately 300 metres from School ? 1. Throughout 1 September and during the day of 2 September the relatives were generally calm. The Head of the Analysis and Information Department of the Administration of the President of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, Lev Dzugayev would periodically come out to talk to them and report on the latest situation. During each announcement he underlined that the use of force to resolve the situation had been excluded and that the army staff would negotiate with the terrorists. The majority of those people questioned that day felt certain that the Government would do everything to save the children, and avoid storming the school.

The situation began to heat up towards the evening of 2 September . Dzugayev's announcements became fewer and contained less information. It became apparent that the negotiations with the terrorists were not having the required effect, and those in power were not prepared to carry out the terrorists' demands.

The first widespread outburst of emotions came soon after the release of the group of hostages on 2 September. When the representatives of the army staff read out the names of those released, some of those whose children were not in the lists, began to get hysterical. Everyone, including the men, were crying. From this point on the tension only grew.

Towards the evening of 2 September groups of men in civilian clothes began to gather in the vicinity of the Palace of Culture. Some of them were armed. At around 10 p.m. some representatives of the North Ossetia governing structures and some local men put on white gauze armbands. When Memorial monitors asked "what are the armbands for?", two civilians in camouflage uniform without identifying marks (judging by their accent, they were of South Ossetian origin) replied: "We are fighters. The armbands are to be sure of seeing each other". "Is the school going to be stormed?", we asked. "Not until our commander gives the word".

By 11 p.m. on 2 September the power structures had reinforced their positions around the school. Armoured troop carriers were on nearby streets around the school perimeter and tanks had been moved into position near the railway lines. However during the evening and the night nothing happened.

On 3 September at 6.20 – 6.30 a.m. shots from a grenade launcher could be heard coming from the school.

At 11 a.m. the President of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania Alexander Dzasohov, spoke to the relatives gathered in the Palace of Culture. He said that they would not storm the school.

At approximately 1 p.m. chaotic shooting started and explosions could be heard in the vicinity of the school. Very soon the first hostages appeared. The children were running out of the school, the locals began taking them home and the injured to hospital. There were not enough ambulances. The injured were put into private cars. At first the corpses were also being sent to the hospitals, later those who had been killed were laid out on the streets, near

the back entrance to the school. Amongst the corpses we saw only women and children. There were many armed men in civilian clothes milling about.

After 3 p.m. the shooting began to die down. Several people, identified as “terrorists”, were brought out of the school. One of them, who had already been wounded, was beaten to death by the crowd. Another injured man was set upon by the crowd but managed to convince his attackers that he was not a terrorist. Journalists tried to photograph this episode. They were also set upon by the incensed people, and some were slightly injured. Not far from the Palace of Culture a soldier was struck in the face by a man.

The main part of the operation was over by 6 p.m. Relatives went to look for their children at the Beslan Town Hospital. On the walls of the hospital blocks were lists of names of those hostages who had been taken to the various hospitals in Vladikavkaz.

## **2. Demonstrations Condemning Terror in Ingushetia and Chechnya**

**On September 34**, in the towns of *Grozny, Nazran, Gudermes* and *Urus-Martan* took place demonstrations of solidarity with the victims of Beslan, condemning the terrorist act in the school. Apart from regular citizens representatives of authorities and religious leadership were present at the events.

The speakers at the demonstration condemned hostage taking in Beslan and emphasized that such horrendous acts had no justification. Official letters of support were adopted to the Ossetian people, to hostages, their relatives and friends.

## **3. The Situation in Prigorodny District of North Osetia after the Tragedy in Beslan**

After the terrorist act in Beslan the situation in Prigorodny district of North Osetia, the area of residence of a significant Ingush minority, became very tense. The tensions were caused by two major factors - the actively circulated rumors that the hostage taking was carried out primarily by the Ingushis and the history of unresolved ethnic hostility between the Ingush and the Osetian peoples.

The gossips that terrorists, taking the hostages in school, were Ingushis appeared the very first day. Besides, it was speculated that weapons for fighters had been brought into the school by a team of construction workers – ethnic Ingushis, who carried out construction works on the premises. The authorities did not try to curb these dangerous and false talks. The Russian press, not infrequently encouraged anti-Ingush sentiments by reproducing anti-Ingush stereotypes (see for example: Moskovsky Komsomolets, October 8, “*Proklyatye voprosy Beslana*”)

The tragedy in Beslan intensified already existing problems - the unresolved ethnic conflict of 1992. In the fall of 1992 in *Prigorodny district* of North Osetia-Alania broke out a short but very ferocious armed conflict between the Ingushis and the Osetians. According to different estimates 35-60, 000 Ingush were expelled from their historic homeland in Prigorodny district of North Osetia-Alania and the capital city of Vladikavkaz; the majority of them fled to the neighboring Ingushetia. The process of return was very difficult and long, and the political cause of the conflict – the territorial dispute – had not been tackled. The relatives of the victims in Beslan decided that their first enemies were the Ingushis and threatened Ingushis with revenge. Naturally, this created the atmosphere of intense tension in Prigorodny district and in Vladikavkaz.

Schools in the villages of mixed settlement started the academic year 13 days later- on September 13. "The first academic quarter<sup>1</sup> was ruined,"- said the deputy principle of school # 2 Barzieva Zhimsari: "the parents would not let children go to school". "We were turned into enemies, this is hard and painful. For the Ingushis child murder is the worst possible crime. We have the cult of children, we live for the family continuation, for our off springs. Those who took hostages in Beslan are not Ingushis. They have no right to call themselves Ingushis, -" said the teacher of physics, Gardanov Khamzat.

The students of Ingush and Chechen nationalities studying in Vladikavkaz were asked to take academic leave. Totally there were over 300 students of Chechen and Ingush nationality in Ossetia.

Ten days after the tragedy in Beslan the administrative border of Ingushetia and Osetia was closed. The last days of September, the checkpoint KPP –105 functioned as usual.

## II. The Situation in the Chechen Republic and Republic Ingushetia: September 2004

### 1. Statistics

According to the data of HRC "Memorial" (We are able to carry out monitoring over a limited territory, 25-30 % of Chechnya, thus, the data below is incomplete) in September 2004:

1. *Killed*: 11 persons (10 civilians, 1 repres. of power agencies)
2. *Kidnapped*: 11 persons

subsequently set free or released for ransom – 6  
subsequently killed – 2  
went missing –3

NB! Due to the specificity of human rights monitoring in the Chechen Republic, it is important to take into consideration the fact that data for the two most recent months are usually incomplete and then updated the following months. Therefore, unfortunately, the figures for murdered and disappeared in September 2004 are likely to grow.

### 2. From the "Chronicle of Violence"

#### Ingushetia

**On September 3** at about 4 a.m. in the village *Troitskaya, Sunzhensky district of Ingushetia* unidentified representatives of federal power agencies in masks kidnapped and drove into unknown direction Masuev family: **Masuev Turko**, born 1931, his wife, **Masueva Zama**, born 1944, their daughters: **Kulsum**, 1969, **Petman**, 1972, **Khavu**, 1976 and their younger son **Badrudi**, 1978. The servicemen arrived at dawn by two armed personnel carriers (one of them had registration number 041), by two trucks "Ural" and two "Niva" cars. Many of them were in masks, spoke unaccented Russian. Those with unmasked faces were of Slavic nationality.

Having blocked the household of Masuev family, the military servicemen broke into the yard. They entered the premises and demanded that everyone who was at home, quickly packed and got ready to leave. No search was carried out in houses. Then the column with the kidnapped turned from Sovetskaya street to the so-called inner highway, connecting Nazran

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<sup>1</sup> Quarter – ½ of semester, the secondary school academic year is divided into quarters, in the end of each quarter grading is taking place.

and Ordzonikidzevskaya. Subsequently, it turned out that the family was taken to the Russian military base at Khankala.

Until 1999 the Masuev family lived in the village *Kharseboj, Shatoj district of Chechnya* and moved to Ingushetia after the beginning of the military campaign. Since then, Masuevs had remained in Troitskaya, renting apartments.

According to the relatives and neighbors, Turko Masuev was a very religious man, knew Koran and was a respected religious authority. Both Mansuev daughters were doing small business – Kusum fried and sold seeds, Khavu baked bread for sale. Their son Badrudi was a worker in a private carpenter workshop.

Subsequently, the family was released, after the federal servicemen found out that they had no links to terrorists, who took hostages in Beslan. In detainment the family was not subjected to violence.

**On September 3** from the territory of automobile technical service station at the crossroad of *Rostov -Baku highway and road to Nesterovskaya village* was kidnapped **Khashiev Alaudin**, born 1974, a resident of Galashki village.

Khashiev was kidnapped by a group of 13-14 unidentified armed men in camouflage uniform. All of the kidnapers except two had their faces masked. They arrived at the station at about midday, forced all the workers to walls with their hands up. One of the kidnapers in mask pointed at Alaudin Khashiev, others put handcuffs on him, placed him in car and left in the direction of Karabulak.

The relatives of Khashiev followed the kidnapers: at the traffic police checkpoint near Yandare village they showed identification documents and moved on to Narzan. The traffic policemen said, they had IDs of FSB officers. Khashievs turned to the law enforcement agencies of Sunzhensky district, of Republic Ingushetia, sent appeals to the President of the Russian Federation and Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation.

As of today the whereabouts of Alaudin Khashiev remain unknown.

## **Chechnya**

**On September 4**, at 11: 30 in Grozny, unidentified armed persons detained and carried into unknown **Saiev Idris**, 22 years old, resident of *Admirala Makarova street*.

Market vendors eye-witnessed the detainment. They explained that Idris was kidnapped by a group of armed men in camouflage uniform. The kidnapers, ethnic Chechens, arrived at the bus stop where Saiev was standing by two Zhiguli cars (7 and 9 model) and without explanations forced him into one of the cars and drove in the unknown directions. On the fact of kidnapping the father of Idris, Saiev Turpal, filed a complaint to ROVD of Oktyabr'sky district.

**On September 6**, the body of Saiev Idris with the marks of violent death was found near the destroyed building of Chechen State University at *Sheripova street*. After the identification the relatives buried the body at the family cemetery in *Chechen Aul*. According to Saiev, the body of Idris had marks of torture by electricity, his left hand and left arm were broken, the back of his skull was smashed and there was a aperture from shot in the head. The family claims that Idris spent three last years in Cherkessk, and came to Chechnya with relatives for vacation.

**On September 8**, militiamen found two corpses with marks of violent death and gun shot injuries between the villages *Geldagan* and *Avtury*. After careful examination of bodies and interrogation of the local residents, the identity of the killed persons was established, as well as the circumstances of their death.

The murdered were **Amuev Khasan**, 36 y.o., resident of village Dzurgurty, *Kurchaloy district of Chechnya* and **Mezhidov Musa**, the resident of Shali. Both were kidnapped by “kadyrovtsy” in Grozny in August 2004.

Amuev Khasan participated in the first Chechen war, being part of the presidential guard. Allegedly, he also participated in Chechen armed formations during the second war. There is no data about Mezhidov’s past. He was much younger than Amuev, and was allegedly a fighter as well.

After the kidnapping, Mezhidov and Amuev were delivered to one of the bases of “kadyrovtsy” in the village of Geldagan. After interrogation under torture “kadyrovtsy” shot these men dead.

**On September 11**, at 5: 10 p.m. at the federal highway “Kavkaz”, at the cross section of *Assinovskaja village* and *Servovodsk*, a group of unidentified men in masks, dressed in black uniform, shot dead three residents of Assinovskaya:

1. **Vitaev Alikhan**, born 1980
2. **Machiev Anzor**, born 1981
3. **Chergizov**, age unknown

According to eye-witnesses, shortly before the accident the highway at the crossroad was blocked by several cars (VAZ 21099, VAZ 21021- NIVA). In the cars were armed men in masks, dressed in black military uniform. At about 5:10 from the direction of Grozny, a car VAZ-2106 with Viataev, Machiev and Chergizov arrived. Unidentified persons came out of their cars and ordered the car to stop.

The car did not stop, then the unidentified persons opened fire. The car drove into the trench. The unidentified persons ran up to the car, dragged two persons out, shot several times from machine guns, then made control shots in the head. After that they leisurely returned to their cars and left. The eye-witnesses suspect that the unidentified persons were representatives of the Kadyrov Security Service.

The co-villages have different opinions about the victims. Many suspect them of criminal activity, however, all agree that Vitaev, Machiev, Chergizov had nothing to do with Chechen armed resistance.

**On September 12** in the town of *Argun* unidentified armed persons in masks kidnapped **Sadullaeva Khalimat**, born 1967, resident of *Novaja street, 31*, the mother of four children.

According to Khalimat’s mother Tamara at dawn they were woken up by some noise. Having looked out of the window she saw military persons in masks. The armed persons arrived by a mini-van “Gazel” and cars “YAZ-21099” (Zhiguli, 99). Tamara learnt about her daughter’s detainment from her grandchildren, who explained that the military servicemen, speaking unaccented Russian, came into the house and ordered everyone to gather in one room. One of them pointed at Khalimat’s sister and asked his colleague “Is it her?” Having got a negative response he pointed at Khalimat. The colleague nodded and the military servicemen took Khalimat outside.

The next day the relatives of Sajdulaeva turned to ROVD, commandant office and prosecution. However, the representatives of law enforcement agencies did nothing to help.

According to the relatives, Khalimat was a housewife, bringing up children, the youngest of whom was 8 y. o. Earlier Khalimat lived in house # 26 at *Gagarina street*, which burnt down on June 28, 2004 during armed clash between Chechen fighters and federal military servicemen. The relatives of Khalimat think that the military servicemen could have suspected Khalimat to having had connections with fighters.

“Memorial” also received notification that at the same time, in Argun was kidnapped another woman. Its only known that her name was **Myalkh-azij** and that she was a vendor at the market. Apart from this in mid September in the market was kidnapped **Arsamikov Aslan**, resident of *Vygonnaja street 5/a*. Aslan was selling gasoline at the market.

In the local administration of Argun “Memorial” monitors were told that Arsamikov and Myalkh-azni were released and safely returned home. However, the residents of Argun, invalidated this information.

At night of **September 16**, in the village of *Kotar-Yurt, Achkhei-Martanovsky district of Chechnya*, 20-25 unidentified armed persons in camouflage uniform and in masks, arrived by APC without registration numbers and two mini-vans “Gazel”, entered the house N 25, located at *Pervomajskaya street*.

Threatening with guns the unidentified men kidnapped **Mukaev Kh.M.**, born 1978, and drove him in the unknown direction. During detainment one of the servicemen hit with gun butt **Mukaeva M**, born 1920, who tried to prevent the detainment. The elderly woman Mukaeva M. died from the hit.

**On September 22**, at about 11 p.m. in the village *Kotar-Yurt, Achkhei-Martanovsky district* was killed **Zajpulaev Isa**, the captain of local militia, born 1956. Zajpulaev Isa was shot dead at the moment when he was entering his yard. The assaulters shot from the side of the nearby vegetable garden.

**On September 23**, in the village *Starye Atagi, Groznensky district of Chechnya*, the personnel of local ROVD, together with “kadyrovtsy” and the personnel of republican OMON carried out a special operation for checking the passport regime. In the operation were used “YAZ” and “URAL” cars and several “Zhiguli” cars (model 99, Niva).

Since early morning, the local militiamen put out checkpoints at the roads. Several groups were carrying out door-to-door check ups in the private sector.

The servicemen who carried out the operation did not hide their faces under masks, they hardly ever presented their identity, often behaved impolitely, in some cases were openly rude. All men, whom they considered suspicious were taken by cars to the outskirts of Mesker-Yurt, where was organized the headquarter of the operation. Totally, 8 men were detained:

1. **Maaev Alvi**
2. **Bakaev Isa**
3. **Sugaipov Said Khusein**
4. **Astamirov Ramzan**
5. **Kataev Gelani**
6. **Kagirov Vakha**
7. **Abdulkhadzhiev Abu-Khasan**
8. **Galaev Apti**

Three of the detained (Kagirov, Astamirov and Bakaev) were beaten. Thus, **Kagirov Vakha**, representative of Shatojsky ROVD got a brain concussion, several of his ribs had been broken. At 4 p.m. the operation was over and all the detained were released.

**On September 30**, 300 meters of village *Zhaglary, Kurchaloy district of Chechnya*, North side of the road was found a corpse of **Dzabrailov Musa**, with the marks of violence (broken skull, numerous bone fractures). The corpses already started to decompose. Subsequently, two “TT” machinegun bullets were taken out of the corpse, calibre 5,45.

Musa was detained in July 2004 in Gudermes, by representatives of traffic police. Subsequently he was transferred to the prison of Tsentaroy village.

For full version of the "Chronicle of Violence" for June 2004 in Russian, please, consult our web site at <http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/rubr/2/index.htm>

#### IV. **Armed Clashes Between the Federal Servicemen and the Chechen Fighters**

**On September 23, three cases of insurgency and armed clashes were registered by HRC "Memorial" in Kurchaloy and Shalinky district of Chechnya.**

**On September 23,** at 7 p.m. a groups of fighters entered the village *Majrtup, Kurchaloy district of Chechnya*. The unit numbered about 200 persons. At the entrance to the village, at the southern outskirts, the combatants subjected to fire a YAZ car, with three Russian military servicemen. All the three of them were killed. In the village itself was a short fight in the house of Salmanov family. In the crossfire were killed **Salmanov Baj-Ali**, 40 years old, his nephew **Salmanov Baddrudi**, 18 years old, was injured a physically disabled man - **Salmanov Ruslan**, 32 years old

The choice of Salmanov house was not accidental. In November 2002, this house was visited by two Chechens, **Ousman Dzabokhanov** from Kurchaloy and a man named **Imran**. They came to collect money, which a Salmanov family member, Salmanov Lemi, owed them for a KAMAZ truck, which he had bought from them. Lemi, an employee of ROSH at the Russian military base in Khankala, refused to pay the debt and killed both men.

According to the residents of Majrtup, the group of fighters, which attacked the Salmanov house was led by a brother of one of the killed men - Imran. Lemi Salmanov was not at home, so they killed his close relatives.

Before retreat, the fighters kidnapped two local residents, **Aliev**, 27 y.o., *resident of Nuradilova street* and **Akbulatov**, *resident of Sheripova street*.

**On September 23,** at 8: 15 p.m. a unit of Chechen combatants numbering about 300 entered the village *Alleroj, Kurchaloy district of Chechnya*.

In the village the fighters divided into several groups. One of them surrounded the headquarters of Kadyrov Security Service. However, they did not attempt to enter inside and shot into the air. In the meantime, a Volga car left the territory of the headquarters. The fighters stopped the car, pooled the driver out and burnt the car. The driver was set free.

Another group of fighters, headed by Akhmet Avdarkhanov, entered the yard of **Sulejman Abuev**, the commander of local "kadyrovtsy" unit. In the house was the elderly mother of Sulejman. Avdorkhanov announced that he would burn the house of house of her son, since he was a "munafik" (the traitor of faith). In the yard of Sulejman were two houses, the combatants burnt one of them, leaving the other for the family "to have a roof above their heads".

At 11 p.m. a helicopter started to circle around the village. The fighters opened fire from gun machine and the helicopter left. No serious clashes took place. The fighters were walking freely around the village, did shopping, paid for their purchases. There was hazardous shooting every now and then. Allegedly, a 13 year old girl was wounded. Closer to midnight, the fighters left.

In the morning of September 25, "kadyrovtsy" arrived at the village. They were very aggressive, and threatened to reduce the village to rubble. In revenge "kadyrovtsy" burnt several houses of fighters' relatives, e.g. the house of **Nasurov Khas-Magomed** and **Dalkhadov Ruslan** (kidnapped and beaten to death by "kadyrovtsy" in spring 2004). Totally 9 houses were burnt in Alleroy in two days.

**On September 23,** a unit of Chechen fighters numbering over 100 persons entered the village of *Avtury, Shalinsky district of Chechnya*, and burnt the building of local administration.

The village was subjected to fire from the helicopter, one civilian was killed. No data concerning the losses of fighters has been available. At about midnight the unit freely left the village.

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## **V. Demonstrations of Protest against Pardoning of Colonel Budanov**

***On September 21***, a demonstration against pardoning of colonel Budanov took place in the center of Grozny. The demonstration was organized by students of Chechen university, colleges and high schools. The students were holding slogans “No pardon to the rapist and murderer” , “Chechen youth is against pardoning of murderer Budanov” etc.

Most of the speakers noted that pardoning of colonel Budanov, one of a handful federal servicemen ever brought to justice for abuse against Chechen civilians, would be another precedent of impunity for those, who commit crimes against civilians in Chechnya and prove that war criminals find support and justification with Russian civilians and authorities. Students composed a letter to President Putin, which emphasized that pardoning Budanov would destroy the fragile trust of the Chechen people to the Russian judicial system.