**The Situation in the Republic of Ingushetia**

**En Route to Destabilization**

**September 2007**

During the summer months the situation in this republic has drastically taken a turn for the worse. The responsibility for this lies primarily with the law enforcement agencies that have been carrying out “counter-terrorist operations” in Ingushetia with absolutely unacceptable methods.

This is far from the first aggravation of the situation in Ingushetia. Outbursts of violence have happened here periodically. Militant attacks on policemen and soldiers; murders of state officials; law-enforcement special operations, during which summary executions and abductions of people take place – all of these have been realities of life in Ingushetia for the past five years. However, the level of destabilization of the situation in the current events can be compared only to the events of June, 2004, when a large group of militant fighters, which included many ethnic Ingushs, temporarily took control of a number of towns and villages, including the cities of Nazran and Karabulak.

Of course, a number of aspects of the present situation are radically different from the situation in 2004. Today the militants do not undertake any large-scale actions; they avoid open collisions and choose to fire by laying ambushes or to attempt assassination of individual law enforcement officers and state officials. Three years ago, the fact that local residents of Ingushetia participated in attacking Ingush policemen would most likely arouse astonishment and bewilderment. Today, unfortunately, such an event does not surprise anyone. Back then the authorities could use the tide of indignation, caused by the fact that the militants have unleashed armed conflicts in the Republic, to receive real support from the population. Today the Republic’s population distrusts the authorities, and no hope for support can be harbored.

However one thing unfortunately remains unchanged – the methods used by law enforcement agencies in their attempt to “fight terrorism”. Arrested or detained individuals disappear and perish. Special operations in populated spots go along with the most outrageous violations of human rights and of Russian legislation. Summary executions happen on the spot. Suspects are cruelly tortured. Defense attorneys are hindered from doing their jobs. Criminal cases are falsified.

Such methods of “counter-terrorism” destabilize the situation and promote further strengthening of the terrorist underground. The cruelty of investigation methods and the arbitrary behavior of the courts immediately become known to the whole republic. The terrorist underground receives a new mobilization supply, from the victims or those who want to avenge their relatives. Protest against law enforcement’s arbitrary behavior can also become a motive for taking arms. In 2004, during conversations with “Memorial” staff many Ingushetia residents claimed that this was exactly why some of Ingush young people participate in militants’ raids.

The majority of the population do not support the militants at all. However, over the past three years, many more people found serious reasons for hostility or even hatred toward the representatives of state power.

We do not doubt that it is necessary to fight terrorism; however, such a fight must be carried out in accordance with Russian laws and Russia’s international obligations to observe human rights.

In its 2005 report, “A conveyor of violence”, Memorial gave a warning: the existing system is not able to efficiently fight terrorism; on the contrary, it will continue to entail the most horrifying forms of terror. The recent events only prove that we had been right.

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For the whole first half of 2007, Ingushetia was the source of dramatic news from the North Caucasus.

In February, there were three attacks on religious figures (including a mufti), carried out by unidentified persons, and one attack on a military column. In March a group of unidentified individuals kidnapped the uncle of the President of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov.

During spring, not many reports of terrorist acts and armed collisions – as compared to Chechnya - came from Ingushetia. The Republic’s main problem was a noticeable increase  of illegal activities of law enforcement agencies. Federal law enforcement representatives often entered Ingushetia from the neighbouring republics, Chechnya or North Ossetia, and acted without notifying the local police or the Republic’s prosecutor’s office.

For example, on February 3, 2007, a special operation aiming at arresting a certain militant in the city of Malgobek turned into an long lasting assault on an apartment located in a five-floor building. Neither the building’s inhabitants nor the local police had been warned about the planned operation.

During special operations, armed masked men would charge into houses without introducing themselves or presenting any identification documents. Anyone who dared to speak up would be beaten up; valuables and money often disappeared during searches. Many detained individuals disappeared from their families for a few days and then were “discovered” in a temporary detention facility of Vladikavkaz, the capital of the neighbouring North Ossetia-Alania Republic. Reports on the particular cruelty of the way Ingushs were treated there reached Ingushetia. Considering the fact that many consequences of the 1992 Ossetian-Ingush Conflict have not been overcome yet, this unavoidably led to the aggravation of the situation. According to officials, arrested Ingushs had to be taken to the neighbouring republic because a temporary detention facility has not been built yet in Ingushetia. It is quite obvious, however, that such a facility was not constructed in Nazran so that Ingush suspects would have to be taken outside of the Republic. This way it is much easier for the investigators to exert pressure on the arrestees and to prevent defense attorneys from working with them.

Periodically such special operations would lead to deaths of people who did not show any resistance. Thus, for example, on February 7 two young people, A. Gardanov and M. Chakhkiyev, were shot in the center of Nazran. Dozens of passers-by, including deputies, law enforcement officers and human rights activists, witnessed the special operation. All of them denied the fact that the victims tried to show any resistance.

Nevertheless, a news report circulated by the Press Center of the FSB Department in Ingushetia claimed that Gardanov and Chakhkiyev supposedly “resisted arrest and opened fire, and were killed by the replying shots”.

Similarly, on March 15 Kh. Mutaliyev was killed in the front yard of his house; Ingushetia’s law enforcement agencies immediately proclaimed him “the ideological leader of unlawful armed units”.

As a result, back in February popular website *www.ingushetia.ru* published a text that read: *“dozens of young people who understand that tomorrow they might become “suspects” or might be “killed as a result of their armed resistance” are already thinking about taking up arms to fight the FSB and the law enforcement system of the Republic of Ingushetia <…>. These dangerous tendencies can be stopped only by the Republic’s governmental authorities, who must protect their subjects from summary executions and repressions”.*

Any attempts at holding legal protest actions have been stopped by the authorities. Meetings and demonstrations are practically banned in the republic (which is absolutely unlawful).

It is against this background that the Republic’s authorities continued to repeat that the situation in Ingushetia is peaceful and stable.

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In the summer of 2007 militant activity in Ingushetia increased abruptly. Paradoxically enough, this increase immediately followed the intensification of “counter-terrorist measures” of the state law enforcement structures.

Here are just a few examples of the militants’ activity.

At the beginning of July, Kh. Daurbekov, Deputy Head of Administration of the Pliyev Municipal District, was killed. On July 21, Vakha Vedzizhev was shot in open fire in Karabulak. Vedzizhev was a well-know religious figure and a staff member of the Ingushetia Ministry of Public and International Relations. According to some sources, on the same day the militants fired at the motorcade of the Republic’s President; however, officials denied this. On July 27, a group of unidentified fighters held the buildings of FSB Department and of the President’s Administration in the very center of Magas under massive fire for about thirty minutes. One serviceman was killed, a few more were injured. On July 31, a bus carrying Russian MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) soldiers was held under fire in the Malgobek region; and so on, and so forth. There were periods in August when information about explosions, terrorist acts and attacks appeared every day.

The most blood-soaked was the terrorist act in the center of Nazran on August 30, when 4 policemen died in the explosion of a mined car.

Special attention should be given to a new wave of brutal murders of Russian families in Ingushetia, which first swept across the Republic last year. On July 16 in the village of Ordzhonikidzevskaya unidentified individuals shot the family of Russian teacher L. Terekhina, using a handgun with a silencer. Two days later, during the funeral, the bandits set off a grenade at the cemetery. 11 people were wounded. On August 31, the family – husband and two sons – of another Russian teacher, V. Draganchuk, were murdered. There was another attempted murder of a Russian family (a grenade was thrown into the family’s front yard), which, by lucky coincidence, did not lead to any deaths or injuries. It should be noted, however, that the separatist website [www.kavkazcenter.com](http://www.kavkazcenter.com/) claims that “mujahideen” had nothing to do with these murders of ethnic Russians.

Regiment 126 of the Internal Troops (VV) of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is permanently stationed in Ingushetia, alongside with the Motorized Rifle Regiment 503 of the 19th Division of the 58th Army of Ministry of Defense. Due to the sudden and abrupt aggravation of the situation in Ingushetia, a “special comprehensive preventive operation” began and two additional VV MVD regiments were transferred to the Republic.

During this “preventive operation” federal law enforcement authorities reckon less and less with the Republican law enforcement structures. Very brutal anti-terrorism tactics are employed in Ingushetia today; they are similar to the tactics used in Chechnya in the years 2000-2003.

A very vivid example of this is the series of “cleansing operations” carried out this summer. The most brutal and violent one of them took place in the village of Ali-Yurt of Nazran district on July 28, after governmental building in the city of Magas had been fired at from the direction of this village.

According to official reports, *“the counter-terrorist operation was carried out by subdivisions of the VV and the Republican MVD, as well as the united army forces stationed in the North Caucasus”*. However, in an official reply to a Memorial Human Rights Center’s inquiry, the Republic’s MVD denied the participation of its staff members in this operation.

Around 4 am, military personnel surrounded and blocked the village, and then went on to charge into houses and beat up local residents. The elderly and the adolescents were beaten up. In all registered cases of violence against innocent civilians the “federal security forces” acted in a standard manner: they entered houses by force, did not introduce themselves, started shooting into the air, used abusive and obscene language and beat up people without any reason. Luckily, this operation did not result in any deaths.

The character of the operation in this village was primarily punitive. This is indicated by the servicemen’s lack of any interest in the local residents’ documents, as well as by the “interrogations”, during which the interrogators did not even listen to the answers from the people they were beating up. One of the federal soldiers yelled that he is ready to burn this village down.

As a result of this “operation”, 7 residents of the village were detained and taken to the Republican FSB (Federal Security Service) department. There they were interrogated, with the use of torture, and later released. All of them had serious health-related conditions; three of them were taken by their relatives to the hospital, where doctors registered serious bodily injuries. For example, as a result of the beatings Ruslan Ganizhev suffered a serious concussion, rib fractures and prolapse of the kidneys.

A total of about 30 individuals were taken from the village of Ali-Yurt to the Central Clinical Hospital of Nazran. However, many of them did not receive any medical documents at the time of discharge. In their medical records, the doctors wrote that the patients left the hospital at their own will, without asking for any medical documents. In the few days following discharge from the hospital, the doctors that did give out medical certificates asked the patients to return them, explaining that they have been threatened with dismissal from their jobs.

Nevertheless, Ingushetia’s prosecutor’s office was forced to initiate a criminal investigation of the beatings. As of today, this criminal case has been handed over to the military prosecutor’s office. So far nobody has been held accountable for this crime.

In the face of such arbitrary behavior and abuse, this summer the peaceful civilian population of Ingushetia was forced, on numerous occasions, to confront the federal law enforcement authorities. This is a very dangerous symptom of the population’s complete loss of trust for state institutions.

Thus, for example, the residents of the village of Surkhakhi were able to prevent the abduction of one of the village men, without any help from the authorities. In the morning of June 27, a group of armed masked men charged into one of the village houses and grabbed its inhabitant, Kh. Aushev. He was pushed into a car and almost taken away. The armed men did not present any personal identification documents and did not explain anything. However, they were not able to leave the village – the local residents, armed with pitchforks and axes, blocked the road. Soon the police arrived and asked the armed men to identify themselves. As it turned out, they were FSB officers; however, they did not have a warrant for Aushev’s arrest. They were forced to release Kh. Aushev and leave. In the afternoon Kh. Aushev’s relatives took him to the office of Ingushetia’s MVD and handed him over to the law enforcement officers. Before doing so, however, they made the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia promise that he will personally find out what Khalit Aushev is accused of and will make sure that Aushev is not taken outside of Ingushetia.

On September 2, a crowd of residents of the city of Karabulak tried to punish and avenge themselves on FSB officers who had shot an unarmed man. Shortly before this incident, a group of armed men in civilian clothes and face masks opened fire on Oskanov Street in Karabulak. They were shooting at the backs of young men who had just come out of a computer game club and were running away. It was only by lucky coincidence that none of the passers-by were injured. One of the young men who were trying to run away, Apti Dolakov, was seriously wounded and then, before the eyes of numerous witnesses, deliberately “finished off” by a “controlling” shot in the head. Then the murderer put a grenade into Dolakov’s hand. Attracted by the sound of gunshots, a group of republican OMON (special police unit) officers came to the scene. They asked the masked men to identify themselves. As a reply, the latter threatened to open fire. A crowd of indignant city residents that has gathered in the meantime demanded that the murderers be handed over to them for revenge and punishment. Only direct and firm actions allowed the Ingush policemen to hold back the crowd, although with great difficulty. The unidentified attackers were disarmed and taken to a city police station. They were searched and it was discovered that all of them held FSB officers’ badges. The badges, however, had been issued in somebody else’s names, as four Russian participants of the murder had Ingush names on their badges, and the only ethnic Ingush had an Azerbaijani name. Soon some high officials from the Ingushetia FSB department arrived at the Karabulak police department. They demanded that the detainees be released, and their weapons be returned to them, along with the used bullet cartridge cases found on the murder scene. These orders were followed. Thus it was not possible to check the weapons of this FSB unit for possible prior use in other murders.

This incident had a “further development” on September 13, when Dmitry Kozak, the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Russian President in the Southern Federal District, visited Ingushetia. During a meeting in Magas, the capital of Ingushetia, D. Kozak pounced on the MVD of Ingushetia, criticizing the policemen and accusing them of negligence, venality and acting as accomplices to the militants. The Representative particularly dwelled on the Karabulak events of September 2. D. Kozak was outraged not by the unlawful actions of FSB officers, but by the fact that the policemen dared to detain them and deliver them to the city police department. The Russian President’s Representative demanded that the police officers be punished for carrying out their professional duties and forbid them from taking any action against the unlawful arbitrary behavior of unidentified men in civilian clothes. In this case, however, it is not clear how the police officers will be able to tell FSB officers apart from militants. This just might be one of the reasons for the latter’s successful operations in the streets of Ingush towns and villages.

On September 19, news of yet another abduction of two Ingushetia residents led to mass upheaval in Nazran. Two residents of the village of Surkhakhi, M.O. Aushev and M.M. Aushev, were kidnapped on September 18, when they were on their way home from Grozny. Armed men in camouflage uniforms shoved the two men into a car and drove off to an unknown destination, without giving any explanations. As the men’s relatives were able to find out, although the kidnapping had taken place in Chechnya, the car with the men had passed through a road block on the border of Ingushetia and entered the Republic.

We should note that earlier, on June 17, one of the two kidnapped men, M.O. Aushev, had been illegally detained by FSB officers and taken to North Ossetia, where he was tortured and persuaded to collaborate with the authorities. Later he was released.

On the day following the abduction, a few hundred people, including Surkhakhi residents, relatives of other kidnapped individuals, victims of the authorities’ arbitrary actions and sympathizing individuals used oversized concrete bricks to block off one of the intersections in Nazran. The people demanded that the Aushevs be found and brought back home, that other kidnappings and murders of Ingushetia residents be investigated and that the criminals be punished. In the late afternoon soldiers of the Republican OMON, on the order of their superiors, attempted to break up the meeting and to unblock the intersection. The collisions that ensued included assault and battery of civilians, stoning of the police officers, and machine-gun fire above the heads of the crowd from armed vehicles pulled to the site. The OMON was forced to retreat.

Around 2 am the participants of the meeting found out that both of the kidnapped men have been released. The people unblocked the intersection and returned to their homes.

Later the two Aushevs recounted that they were held in some basement, beaten and tortured by electricity. They were threatened with execution by shooting; M.O. Aushev was charged with daring to tell about the attempt to recruit him as a collaborator during his June arrest. However, suddenly they were taken back to Chechnya and released next to one of the district police stations. Local police officers were the ones who took them back home.

Thus the authorities have clearly shown Ingushetia’s residents that law and legal rights do not matter. Any results can be achieved only by use of force.

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On September 16, unidentified individuals shot FSB lieutenant-colonel A. Kalimatov, who had been dispatched to the North Caucasus as part of an investigation group, sent to investigate cases of kidnapping of Ingushs and Chechens in North Ossetia.

On September 17, unidentified individuals shot down acting head Criminal Investigations Unit of the Republican Police Department A. Neyriyev when he was coming out of a mosque after prayer.

On September 20, unidentified individuals fired at a military cargo truck near the village of Yandare in Ingushetia. Two soldiers were wounded.

On September 20, a car carrying police officers was fired at in Nazran. As a result, two officers were killed and two more wounded.

Events in Ingushetia continue.

**Recommendations**

To improve the situation in Ingushetia (as in other regions of Northern Caucasia) effective measures to stop massive and systematic human rights violations, particularly those perpetrated by Interior Ministry and Federal Security Service officials, must be undertaken.
Such measures must include but not be limited to the following:

-                          Carrying out adequate investigation into cases of human rights violations and bringing the perpetrators to accountability.

-                          Having the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation conduct a well-rounded review of the activities of enforcement agencies and procuracy bodies in the region. In particular it is essential to look into all cases relevant to participation of individuals in illegal armed formations, which have been investigated in those republics, and send for re-investigation and re-trial those cases where there is evidence of torture and forced confessions.

-                          Putting an end to the widespread practice of “temporary disappearances” of detained persons. In order to decrease the risk of torture as well as in order to guarantee the legal rights of the family members of the detained, it is essential to ensure that relatives of the detained are speedily informed on the whereabouts of the detained.

-                          Instructing members of federal and local enforcement bodies and security services through about the absolute necessity to respect and observe human rights within the framework of their activities as well as about the accountability for following criminal orders of superior instances and servicemen.

-                          Reviewing the activities and competence of personnel of federal and local enforcement bodies and security services and ensuring that their activities are in full compliance with relevant legislation of the Russian Federation.

-                          Proving adequate legal and judicial protection and due compensations to victims of human rights violations.

-                          Effectively guaranteeing access to places of temporary and pre-trial detention for international humanitarian organizations, including the ICRC, in order to male prisoner visitation possible on conditions acceptable to those organizations.

-                          Cooperating with the human rights protection mechanisms and agencies of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, including the special procedures of the UN Human Rights Commission and the treaty bodies of the Council of Europe and the UN.

-                          Effectively cooperating the Council of Europe Anti-torture Committee.

-                          Extending the necessary assistance to Russian and international human rights organizations in their human rights monitoring work in the Northern Caucasus. Cooperating with such organization in eliminating the climate of impunity and improving the human rights situation in the region.

-                          Ensuring the compliance of the state activities within the frames of the flight against terrorism, both on the level of normative acts and on the level of practices, to the international human rights standards and the international humanitarian law, including the European Convention for Human rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Geneva Conventions, and the Council of Europe Guidelines on Human Rights and the Fight against Terrorism.