

General Contribution

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Russia, Moscow.
RPO "NORD-OST".
Tel.: +7-495-704-37-02;
+7-916-524-00-57;
+7-910-477-51-16;
E-mail: nickolayk@yandex.ru
karpovivan@bk.ru
<http://nord-ost.org/>

"NORD-OST" Organization was created almost immediately after the tragedy. Together it was easier to sustain our common grief. In October 2003 we have got our organization registered, and having become a legal entity, we manifested ourselves as "NORD-OST" Regional Public Organization for Assisting in Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts. The principle aims of the organization are provision of wide-ranging assistance to all victims of terrorist acts; carrying out events aimed at combating terror; holding the independent investigation of terrorist act in "NORD-OST".

By now our organization was joined by victims of explosions of houses in Volgograd and Moscow in 1999, explosion in Moscow metro between "Avtozavodskaya-Paveletskaya" span in 2004, explosions of aircrafts en route Moscow-Volgograd and Moscow-Sochi in August 2004, and victims of the seize of hostages in School #1 in Beslan in 2004.

Unfortunately, our organization does not enjoy an ongoing financial support, and that is why our abilities to provide targeted aid are quite limited. Everything that we managed to do by now is only a little drop in the ocean of needs of victims of terrorist attacks.

The absence of status of "victim of terrorist act" resulted in the fact, that people who were poisoned by an unknown substance during the storming of Moscow theatre building, have their diagnosis stated as "domestic accident" – as if the damage to their health was inflicted in non-extraordinary circumstances. The victims do not receive free-of-charge medical aid in the amount they actually require. They are forced to make relevant medical tests using their own resources. After the use of gas during the storm of the theatre building the majority of victims encountered various health problems, while most of them have already become potentially disabled persons. People are suffering from loss of memory, encounter problems with pancreas, kidneys and liver. Part of victims has oncology and gynecological diseases. At the same time the information on substance used during the storm, its concentration and duration of effect remains to be kept in secrecy, even though pursuant to the legislation of the Russian Federation the data significant to the health of an individual cannot be a secret.

Psychological trauma caused to the hostages does not go away. People find it difficult and sometimes impossible to overcome a sudden and strong feeling of irritation, and at times that of rage. This brings up another issue: exemption from compulsory military duty. It is obvious, that any arms held by young men with mental distortions may lead to new tragedies. The state, however, evades resolving this issue.

There is a critical issue of financial support of the victims. Having sustained exhausting and humiliating legal proceedings, the families who lost their bread-winners now receive monthly allowances amounting from 250 Rubles (10 Euros) to 1200 Rubles (35 Euros) monthly. For example, the Frolov orphans, aged 4 and 6, who lost their parents in "Nord-Ost", receive a monthly pension in the amount of 250 Rubles (10 Euros). It happens to be pointless to count on any state compensation for their upbringing and education.

It is even more difficult for citizens of the CIS countries, who became victims of terrorist acts in the Russian Federation, but who are neither protected by Russian laws, nor by the laws of their respective countries. Since they are not citizens of the Russian Federation, they cannot count even on the minimum offered to the Russians. In their respective countries, on the other hand, they are also not recognized as victims, since the terrorist act occurred in another country.

The problems concerning health of people, their mental state and the way families live having lost their children are the same as of victims of the terrorist act in Beslan. Children who suffered from severe injuries have only received the status of handicapped children. Allowances given to them amount to about 1000 Rubles (less than 30 Euros), whereas some of those children are using diapers and ointments for their cicatrix on a daily basis. These children are only provided with minimal medical assistance. But except for the treatment they also require

ongoing rehabilitation, including psychological one. Mutilated children are growing up, and they increasingly become aware of their vulnerability – while at the same time they see that the state has turned away from them. Bitterness and aggression are growing.

The psychological environment in the city where so many parents, grandmothers and grandfathers were deprived of the most precious thing they had still remains quite difficult. Republican authorities are attempting to do something as regards the rehabilitation, but they are lacking funds. Assistance should be provided from the federal budget, but all rehabilitation programs were already stopped.

Since 1999 the victims of terrorist acts have engaged in correspondence regarding the need to adopt a federal law, which would establish the status of “victim of terrorist act” and would envisage certain measures on social protection of those citizens. In 2006 the Russian Federation has adopted a new Law on Combating Terrorism. Article 19 of this Law provides for “psychological, medical and professional rehabilitation, legal aid, employment assistance...” and other measures of social adaptation for the victims of terrorist acts. However all that is intended for victims of those terrorist acts which would happen after January 1, 2007.

Article 18 of this Law states: “The compensation of moral damage caused as a result of a terrorist act is made at the expense of persons who committed it.” Ordinarily, those persons are destroyed at the venue of crime during a counter-terrorism operation, so victims will hardly be able to receive any compensation for moral damage. The status of “victims of terrorist act” is not envisaged in this Law.

After the terrorist acts in Beslan, President Putin has openly stated that Russia cannot ensure security of its citizens. But the adopted Law testifies to the fact that the state does not want to take care of those who survived in the terrorist acts.

Considering the aforementioned, our organization suggests the following:

1. Introducing the status of “victim of terrorist act” for individuals who directly participated in terrorist events and status of “affected by the terrorist act” for the relatives of the deceased;
2. The state should provide compensation for inflicted moral and physical damage, and later obtain these amounts from the offenders;
3. The state must provide free-of-charge medical assistance, hospital and recreational treatment, psychological aid to the victims and the affected persons in adequate amounts;
4. The state must guarantee the provision of financial assistance in adequate amounts to the families who lost their breadwinners;
5. Introduce relevant legislation to release former hostages from compulsory military duty;
6. Using international treaties to resolve the issue of which state should take care of foreign citizens – the state where the terrorist act has taken place, or the state of which the person is a citizen;
7. Using international treaties to establish the minimal standards of necessary assistance;
8. To establish the international commission where the victims of terrorist acts could apply in case if the assistance has not been provided to them in adequate amounts and if they have exhausted all opportunities for protecting their interests within the state.

Seemingly it is in the interest of the state to carry out a thorough investigation into the seizure of hostages in Dubrovka, so that such terrible thing would never happen again. However, the criminal proceeding can only be initiated upon the case of the terrorist act itself. Since all the terrorists were killed during the counter-terrorism operation, there are no guilty people. The criminal proceeding following the mass death of people during the counter-terrorism operation aimed at the rescue of hostages was not even initiated. Documentary photos and videos from the venue have traveled around the world: poisoned people were cumulated on the stairs, and sent on buses to the hospital unaccompanied. But the prosecutor’s office is not interested in the search of those guilty people who managed this operation and committed negligence or abuse of power, which resulted in the death of 125 people (5 more people were shot by the terrorists), of which 68 did not receive any medical assistance.

The fact that Special Forces used a substance of fentanyl type for performing the counter-terrorism operation is an issue which is preferred to be given silence internationally. However this is an actual proof of the fact that the Russian Federation has developed, produced, accumulated, trained the armed forces and used this chemical substance as a weapon in that

situation. And this precedent, when one country is involved in creating this weapon, must be worrisome, since this gives a stimulus for other countries to do the same.

We are being told lies when we are told that the utilized substance was harmless. We are being told lies when the cause of death of our beloved one is stated as exacerbation of chronic diseases. We are being told lies when we are told about thorough and impartial case investigation: during the case hearing by Zamoskvoretskiy district court of Moscow City we have numerously pointed to unreliable, contradictory and incomplete data within the case materials. And even though none of these contradictions was refuted by the prosecutor, the court did not consider them to be unjustified.

We are scared of these lies, because we are paying for it with the lives of our beloved ones.

There is no objective investigation into the terrorist act in Beslan going on. The victims have numerously raised issues regarding the responsibility of the members of the counter-terrorism operation headquarters for the fact that there was no adequate cordoning of the school, that there were not enough ambulance cars, that the fire was not timely turned off, that the heavy defense machinery (tanks and flame throwers) was targeted at school full of children, that the rescue plan was not worked through, which resulted in great number of the deceased from among the experts of “Alpha” and “Vypel” special force groups, that authorities were lying about the number of hostages.

The other day the lawyer of “Mothers of Beslan” victims’ committee Mr. Taymuraz Chedzhemov have announced that he withdrew from the main criminal proceedings relating to the terrorist acts in Beslan, since he was threatened with murder. In his opinion, this threat is related to the fact that he raised an issue of a criminal liability of the members of the counter-terrorism operation headquarters.

Scandalous matter of inhuman treatment of victims is the fact that until today the bodies of 12 people who deceased during the explosions of houses on Guryanova Street and Kashirskoye Highway in 1999 were still not buried. 96 fragments of 12 human bodies are still kept in Lianozovo mortuary. According to the explanation given by the authorities – the state has no funds to carry out a DNA test to establish the identity of the deceased.

Disregarding the lives of people becomes an extremely dangerous trend in Russia. Having violated the right to life, envisaged in the Article 20 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, and in the Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the state, being unwilling to acknowledge its liability for the actions of its representatives is actually violating the Article 6 of the Convention: “everyone... has a right to fair and open trial in reasonable time by an independent and impartial court established on the basis of law.”

Addressing to the world community, we, those who suffered from the terrorist acts, call for the establishment of international commission to carry out an independent investigation of unexampled tragedies in “Nord-Ost” and Beslan for the memory of the deceased and for the future of children and grand-children.