



United States Mission to the OSCE

Ongoing Human Rights Abuses and Violations in Chechnya

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Just last month, the members of the Permanent Council heard the results of the report of the Expert Rapporteur under the Moscow Mechanism’s inquiry on alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. The report concluded, as the United States and other participating States have long believed, that Chechen government officials have committed serious and ongoing human rights violations and abuses with impunity, engaging in “harassment and persecution, arbitrary or unlawful arrests or detentions, torture, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions.” Victims include LGBT individuals, human rights defenders, journalists, and members of civil society, among others.

The report highlighted the case of Oyub Titiev, a human rights defender who is presently in prison on “obviously fabricated evidence.” Russian authorities detained Mr. Titiev just over one year ago on specious drug charges. In reality, he was targeted for his work with *Memorial*, a civil society organization closely involved in the investigation of allegations that local security officials executed 27 Chechens without trial. Allegations of the massacre were so compelling that the Expert Rapporteur recommended Russia investigate at the Federal level. Titiev’s human rights work enraged the Chechen authorities, who have declared that Chechnya henceforth will target human rights activists as it does terrorists.

We call on the Russian Federation to ensure that Oyub Titiev’s human rights are fully respected and immediately release him. We further remind the Russian delegation of their OSCE commitments, including those relating to the right to a fair trial and protection from judicial harassment and arbitrary arrest. We call on Russia to ensure that human rights defenders be allowed to work without harassment in Chechnya.

And now there are new, credible reports of a new wave of torture and attacks against individuals perceived to be members of the LGBT community in Chechnya. Civil society groups reported that at least 40 individuals were illegally detained since December; tragically, two individuals reportedly died in custody after having been tortured. This escalation of abuses, similar to those recounted in the findings of the Moscow Mechanism expert’s report, reportedly began after the report was released, less than one month ago.

We call on Russia to respect the dignity of all persons. No human being should be subject to torture or cruel and inhuman treatment. No government authority is above the law. Lamentably, rather than live up to its international obligations and commitments ***and its own constitution***, Russia “appears to support the perpetrators rather than the victims” and has failed to address the “grave situation” in Chechnya.

Mr. Chair, the Russian Federation cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the grave human rights abuses and violations occurring on its soil. It cannot pretend it is unaware, and it can no longer hide behind flimsy accusations of bias or dubious claims that the reports are not credible, given the overwhelming volume of evidence from multiple sources. We call upon Russia to investigate immediately these new allegations and implement the recommendations in the Moscow Mechanism expert’s report, starting with holding officials who violate the law accountable.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.