

URGENT ACTION

FATE AND WHEREABOUTS OF POLICEMAN UNKNOWN

Former Chechen policeman Artur Aydamirov, 34, disappeared on 8 June in Brest, Belarus, after learning in early 2018 that he is required to perform military service in Syria. He decided to flee Chechnya with his family. Witnesses saw unidentified men in uniform force Artur Aydamirov into a van and drive away. He has not been seen since and there are grave concerns about his fate.

On 8 June, **Artur Aydamirov** went to the train station in Brest to buy train tickets to Poland in an attempt to apply for asylum there. According to his wife, who later spoke to witnesses, four men in uniform approached Artur Aydamirov, handcuffed him, forced him into a van and drove away. The family suspects that he has been driven to Chechnya. All subsequent efforts by his relatives to locate him in Chechnya, including in police stations and morgues, have failed.

Artur Aydamirov is a Chechen policeman from Grozny, Russia, who was injured during his military service in 2014. According to his wife, he applied for a pension due to his injuries and to be discharged, but his request was denied and he remained in the police force. Earlier this year, superiors in his unit told the policemen that they were to be deployed to Syria under a mandatory order, to join the Russian military operation in Syria. Artur Aydamirov was told that he should prepare to leave for Syria on 1 June 2018.

As a result of the order, Artur Aydamirov submitted his resignation and left Chechnya together with his wife and three children for Brest, Belarus, on the border with Poland. He aimed to travel to Poland or another country and apply for asylum. Brest is well-known to Russian and Chechen secret services as Chechen families have fled there to cross the border and seek asylum in Poland or elsewhere. Artur Aydamirov and his family attempted at least nine times to submit documents for asylum with Polish border guards before his disappearance, but each time their documents were returned without any explanation.

There are fears that Artur Aydamirov is held in an undisclosed location by the Chechen authorities and that his safety and well-being are at serious risk.

Please write immediately in Russian, English or your own language to the Belarusian authorities to:

- Urging them to order an immediate investigation into Artur Aydamirov's fate and whereabouts, keeping his family fully informed and updated at all times;
- Insist that if Artur Aydamirov is in the state's custody, that he is immediately released, or, if credible evidence of a recognized offence exists, is transferred to an official place of detention, charged promptly and remanded by an independent civilian court;
- Urging them to ensure that Artur Aydamirov's human rights are protected and respected at all time, including – if he is held in custody – his right to life and freedom from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 AUGUST 2018 TO:

Minister of Interior
Igor Anatolievich Shunevich
Gorodskoy Val str., 4
Minsk, Republic of Belarus,
220030
Email: ums@mia.by
Fax: +375 17 226 02 26
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General of the Republic of Belarus
Alexander Vladimirovich Koniuk
Prosecutor General's Office
Internatsionalnaya Str., 22
220030 Minsk
Belarus
E-mail: info@prokuratura.gov.by
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR SERGEI ALEINIK Embassy of the Republic of Belarus, 6 Kensington Court W8 5DL, 020 7937 3288, Fax 020 7361 0005, uk.london@mfa.gov.by, www.uk.mfa.gov.by
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Artur Aydamirov is one of many Chechen law-enforcement officials who report that they have been ordered to do military service in Syria, and who decided to flee to Brest, Belarus in an attempt to cross into Poland, and apply for asylum. Since his disappearance, his wife has made at least ten more attempts to cross the border with her children but has been refused each time. The Polish border guards have simply refused to follow protocol and admit the Aydamirov's asylum application, in violation of relevant local and international procedures. As a result, the Aydamirov's were returned

Amnesty International has previously documented the case of a man who is a Chechen asylum seeker, who was forcibly disappeared in Brest in September 2017. It transpired that he was arrested by Belarusian authorities and sent back to Chechnya, thus violating the international principle of non-refoulement, where states are prohibited from returning anyone to a situation where they will be at risk of serious human rights violations. Amnesty International has also documented previous cases where Chechen authorities have travelled to Brest to harass and intimidate Chechen families, including through enforced disappearances - a crime under international law.

Enforced disappearances by state agents are shocking human rights violations that continue to be committed in Chechnya. Torture and other ill-treatment is widespread in Chechnya in both official detention centres and unlawful secret detention centres used by Chechen police officers. Appeals, submitted by the relatives of the disappeared to the local police and other authorities are consistently unresolved. In cases when the disappeared persons "re-appear", it often transpires that they were held in incommunicado detention in a police station. No reparation for victims has ever been offered and no perpetrator has ever been brought to justice.

The Polish authorities are subject to increasing criticism of their failure to provide access to asylum procedures of asylum seekers coming via Belarus. On 15 November, the European Parliament adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution on "The situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland" in which it noted "the Polish Government's refusal to... respect the interim orders by the ECtHR on returns to Belarus are visible symbols of Poland not following the EU Treaties". The European Parliament further called on the Polish Government to halt summary returns to Belarus so as to comply with the binding interim orders of the ECtHR of 8 June 2017, and to ensure that anyone who expresses an intention to seek asylum or international protection at Poland's borders enjoys full access to the Polish asylum procedure in line with international obligations and EU law".

Name: Artur Aydamirov
Gender m/f: m

UA: 133/18 Index: EUR 49/8804/2018 Issue Date: 16 July 2018