

URGENT ACTION

TWO FAMILY MEMBERS DISAPPEARED IN CHECHNYA

On 4 February, 20-year-old Salekh Magamadov and 17-year-old Ismail Isaev were abducted by police in Central Russia and taken to Chechnya. They had fled Chechnya in 2020, following their arbitrary detention and reported torture for exercising their right to freedom of expression, and fearing further reprisals, including in connection with their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Their whereabouts are currently unknown. They are victims of enforced disappearance, and their physical and mental integrity and their lives are at risk.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Prosecutor General
Igor Viktorovich Krasnov
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Dear Prosecutor General,

*I am gravely concerned about the enforced disappearance of **Salekh Magamadov** of 20 years of age and **Ismail Isaev** who is 17 years old. According to the Russian LGBT Network, they were apprehended by police at a flat in Nizhnii Novgorod, in an abduction-style operation, on 4 February 2020, and forcibly transferred to Gudermes, Chechnya. Their lawyer was denied access to his clients and any information on the relevant criminal proceedings. They were unlawfully questioned without their lawyer or family members' presence, despite one of them being a minor, then nominally released and immediately arrested and taken away, first to the village of Sernovodskoe and then to an unknown location. The reason for their arrest, their fate and whereabouts remain unknown to their lawyers and family members. They are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment and their lives may be at risk.*

Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev had already suffered unlawful deprivation of liberty and torture and other ill-treatment at the hands of the Chechen authorities. On 30 March 2020, they were arbitrarily detained by the Chechen police and unlawfully held prisoners until May, for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

In the light of the above, I urge you to:

- Take immediate steps to establish and disclose the whereabouts of Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev, and ensure they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;***
- Ensure that they are immediately released unless promptly charged with a recognisable criminal offence, in which case they should have an immediate and unimpeded access to a lawyer of their choice;***
- Ensure their human rights are fully respected, in accordance with Russia's obligations under international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Twenty-year-old Salekh Magamadov and 17-year-old Ismail Isaev have long been targeted by the Chechen authorities. According to media reports, in 2019, at the age of 16, Ismail Isaev faced violence and persecution for his real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. He was captured by the police, beaten and held at a secret location for seven days and released for ransom. On 30 March 2020, Ismail Isaev and Salekh Magamadov, were arbitrary detained by the Chechen police and held at the premises of the patrol police regiment. There, according to their account, they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated in retaliation for moderating a youth Telegram channel "Osak Nakh 95" which contained posts critical of the Chechen authorities and traditions. They were released in May after a video with their forced "apologies" had been published on the Internet. Fearing further reprisals, including in connection with their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, they fled Chechnya in July 2020. The Russian LGBT Network helped Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev move to Nizhny Novgorod, in Central Russia, due to ongoing concerns over their safety.

On 4 February, the LGBT Network reported that police detained Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev at the flat in Nizhny Novgorod where they were staying. One of them managed to quickly call the LGBT Network while the flat was being raided, and the LGBT Network immediately sent them a lawyer. The lawyer discovered an empty flat and evidence of the violent raid. He eventually managed to get confirmation from the local police that Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev had been apprehended by the police, and that they were taken by car to Gudermes, in Chechnya. The police did not disclose any other circumstances of the case.

Upon arrival in Gudermes in the afternoon of 6 February, Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev were questioned at the local police station. Their lawyer was not allowed access to his clients nor was he provided with the details of the case. They were released at around 8pm but immediately re-arrested as soon as they left the police compound, without any explanations, and taken by car to the village of Sernovodskoe, around 90km away, also in Chechnya. Their father and the lawyer followed them. In Sernovodskoe, the lawyer was once again not allowed to see his clients, nor was he allowed into the police station. According to the lawyer, at around 11pm, a senior Chechen official arrived at the police station and, together with police officers, forced his clients' father to give up any attempts to see them, despite being the legal guardian of the underaged Ismail Isaev, or to have the lawyer represent them. Following this, the LGBT Network sent another lawyer to Chechnya.

When the new lawyer arrived the next day, 7 February, the police did not allow him to see his clients and refused to accept his formal complaint. A local commanding police officer told the lawyer that Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev were being questioned by another agency, the Investigation Committee for the Chechen Republic, but refused to disclose the grounds for their detention or share any case file materials. Since then, their whereabouts has been unknown, to their lawyer and their father. On 8 February, the European Court of Human Rights requested that the Russian authorities take urgent steps to ensure that Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev are provided with immediate and unimpeded access to the lawyer of their choice and to their family members, and are immediately examined by an independent health professional.

Over the years, human rights defenders have documented widespread human rights violations in Chechnya, including mass arbitrary detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, and extrajudicial killings. Those who criticise the Chechen authorities, including in social media, face severe reprisals. In September 2020, 19-year-old Salman Tepsurkaev, moderator of a popular Telegram channel "1ADAT", was abducted from Krasnodar region in southern Russia by men presumed to be Chechen law enforcement officials and taken to a secret location in Chechnya. His fate and whereabouts have remained unknown since, despite a criminal investigation having been nominally opened into Salman Tepsurkaev's enforced disappearance, in late November 2020.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 15 April 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev

And copies to:

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