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Fear of torture and ill-treatment

16 May 2003

QATAR/RUSSIAN FEDERATION Zelimkhan Yandarbiev (m), Chechen

Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, a former President of the Chechen Republic, is at risk of being returned from Qatar to the Russian Federation, where he would be at risk of torture or ill-treatment. He has reportedly been living in Qatar with his family since January 2000.

He has reportedly been charged in Russia with his alleged "involvement in preparations of an armed revolt", "complicity in setting up of illegal paramilitary formations" and "attempts on the lives of law enforcement officials". The charges are connected to an armed Chechen incursion into the neighbouring republic of Dagestan in August 1999.

According to an article in the Moscow Times on 8 May, the Russian Federation has previously sent two requests in November 2002 and February 2003 to the Qatari authorities for Zelimkhan Yandarbiev to be returned. The Russian Federation Procuracy General announced on 12 May that there would be a third request, if the Qatari authorities failed to officially respond. The Russian Federation and Qatar however, do not have an extradition agreement.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, a writer and poet by profession, has been politically active since the late 1980s and founded the *Vaynakh Democratic Party* in 1990 which called for the withdrawal of the Chechen Republic from the former Soviet Union. He has been associated with several political groups. Since 1993 and during the first Chechen war of 1994-96, he was deputy president of the Chechen Republic. Following the death of the president, Dzhokhar Dudayev, on 22 April 1996, Zelimkhan Yandarbiev was appointed President. However, in the elections of 27 January 1997 he failed to win the presidential seat.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International recognises the right, and indeed obligation, of governments to bring to justice suspected perpetrators of human rights abuses in the course of proceedings that meet international fair trial standards. However, it also believes that, in line with international standards, no one should be returned to a country where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

There have been persistent and credible reports of torture and ill-treatment in the Russian Federation, particularly in relation to those detained pending trial, with the use of such treatment to elicit "confessions" or incriminating information from suspects appearing to be virtually routine. Beating with fists and batons, along with kicking, are the most common forms of torture and ill-treatment reported to Amnesty International. However, police reportedly often use other torture methods to force suspects to confess. Methods that leave no physical traces or leave marks that will have disappeared by the time the victim has access to the outside world or is brought to court, are also widely used.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- urging the Qatari government not to return Zelimkhan Yandarbiev to the Russian Federation without unequivocal and credible assurances that he will not be subjected to torture or ill treatment in line with Article 3 (1) of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, to which Qatar is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

PO Box 923
Doha, Qatar

Telegrams: His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani , Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 436 12 12

Salutation: Your Highness

COPIES TO:

His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Prime Minister and Minister of Interior

PO Box 115
Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 432 71 77

Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency Hassan bin Abdullah Al-Ghanem
Minister of Justice

PO Box 917
Doha, Qatar

Fax: + 974 483 28 68

Salutation: Your Excellency

and to diplomatic representatives of Qatar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 June 2003.