

## **Russian Federation: Women and girls -- daily victims in the cycle of violence and impunity**

*The Russian Federation's government has failed consistently to protect the human rights of women and girls and break the cycle of violence, Amnesty International stated today as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reviews that country's fifth report.*

*Based on continuous reports by victims and witnesses, Amnesty International presented a briefing to CEDAW highlighting the climate of impunity where alleged perpetrators are rarely brought to justice by the authorities. The climate created by this, in turn promotes further violations of the human rights violations of women since alleged perpetrators know they will go unpunished.*

*Women in Chechnya have experienced a horrific spectrum of abuse in the context of the armed conflict, ranging from torture (including rape) to forced "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. Furthermore, civilian women and girls have also been indiscriminately killed during military operations.*

*In November 2001, AI representatives who travelled to camps at the border with Chechnya, collected corroborating witness testimonies regarding a recent pattern of rape in detention of pregnant Chechen women by Russian soldiers.*

*"Rape is not only used as a weapon of war -- women detainees are also victims of this form of torture at the hands of law enforcement civilians," Amnesty International said.*

Torture and ill-treatment of women and girls in custody is endemic and widespread throughout the Russian Federation. Perpetrators of such treatment among the police enjoy a broad degree of impunity with little likelihood of prosecution for their actions, this actively dissuades victims from filing complaints. Furthermore, prosecutors are notoriously reluctant to take into consideration allegations made by women claiming that they have experienced sexual harassment, intimidation, torture or ill-treatment in police custody.

"Conditions in pre-trial detention facilities and prison colonies are unimaginable and reminiscent of the Stalin era: overcrowded, unhygienic and inhuman," Amnesty International warned.

Menstruating women are not provided with sanitary supplies and have to resort to using rags or the stuffing of their mattresses. Women and girls in pre-trial detention and in prison colonies are often subjected to torture and ill-treatment by the guards. Since there are only three prison colonies for convicted girls in the whole of the Russian Federation, it's very difficult for them to maintain links with their families or receive material support from them.

"Women are not only at risk in the public sphere at the hands of officials -- the blatant disrespect for their integrity has also left them vulnerable in the private sphere as victims of domestic violence and pawns to be trafficked for forced prostitution," Amnesty International stated.

"Until the Russian authorities take concrete steps towards combating impunity and addressing gender specific violations of human rights, the majority of the Russian population -- women -- remain vulnerable and at risk."

*For interviews, please contact Amnesty International's researcher on the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, currently in New York on:*

*+ 44 77 98 588 845*

*For more information, please see:*

*Russian Federation: Summary of concerns on the human rights of women and girls (AI Index EUR 46/004/2002),*

*<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/eur460042002>*

*Russian Federation: Women and girls victims of human rights abuses (selected case studies) (AI Index EUR 46/005/2002),*

*<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/eur460052002>*

*\ENDS*

public document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>