

RUSSIA/CHECHNYA

CIVILIAN KILLINGS IN STAROPROMYSLOVSKI DISTRICT OF GROZNY

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SUMMARY

Russian soldiers summarily executed at least thirty-eight civilians in the Staropromyslovski district of Grozny, Chechnya, between late December and mid-January, according to testimony taken by Human Rights Watch. Most of the victims were women and elderly men, and all appear to have been deliberately shot by Russian soldiers at close range. Russian soldiers also committed many other abuses in the district, including looting and destroying civilian property and forcing residents of the town to risk sniper fire to recover the bodies of fallen Russian soldiers. Six men from the district who were last seen in Russian custody “disappeared” during this same period and remain unaccounted for.

More than a dozen interviews with survivors, eyewitnesses, and family members of the dead revealed detailed information about the killings, which occurred in fourteen separate incidents. Human Rights Watch also received allegations of at least a dozen additional deaths which occurred in the same period. Human Rights Watch is currently investigating these allegations. Because of the continuing Russian offensive and encirclement of Grozny, few eyewitnesses to killings have been able to travel to Ingushetia. Russian military officials continue to deny Human Rights Watch access to Chechnya, making additional on-site investigations impossible.

These summary executions followed similar abuses by Russian forces in the nearby village of Alkhan-Yurt in early December, when at least seventeen people were murdered by Russian forces after they took control and ransacked that village. Although Russian officials were notified about the killings in Alkhan-Yurt and stated that they would conduct an investigation into the killings and make their findings public in early January 2000, Russian military authorities are not known to have seriously investigated the abuses in Alkhan-Yurt. There is also no evidence that Russian authorities are taking steps to prevent similar abuses by their troops in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of the Russian Federation:

Comply With International Humanitarian Law

- Direct all Russian Federation troops to cease violations of international humanitarian law, including looting, destruction of civilian property, summary executions, and rape; instruct Federation troops that any such violations will be investigated and those found responsible will be held accountable;
- Direct all Russian Federation troops to stop the indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force against the civilian population; stop practices that endanger the civilian population, such as forcing civilians to recover the bodies of fallen soldiers; and take all necessary steps to protect civilian populations from the effects of military and police operations;
- Undertake an immediate investigation of abuses committed by Russian Federation troops in Chechnya, including in Alkhan-Yurt and in the Staropromyslovski district of Grozny, and prosecute those found responsible.

Provide Access for the OSCE, Human Rights and Humanitarian Organizations, and Media

- Agree to the immediate deployment in Ingushetia of an international monitoring mission, mandated to observe and report upon the human rights and humanitarian conditions relating to the military operation in Chechnya; such monitoring could be undertaken under the auspices of the existing OSCE Assistance Group, or other competent international agency;
- Accept offers of international humanitarian assistance for displaced persons in Chechnya and neighboring provinces;

- Guarantee safe passage for and unencumbered access to humanitarian aid delivery and distribution in Chechnya and neighboring provinces;
- Allow full and unimpeded access for local and foreign journalists covering the conflict in Chechnya.

To the United Nations:

Create a Commission of Inquiry.

- The Security Council should adopt a resolution condemning the abuses being committed in Chechnya and establishing a commission of inquiry to investigate alleged serious violations of international humanitarian law, including extrajudicial executions. In the event that the Security Council fails to take such action, the General Assembly or the Commission on Human Rights should take these steps.

Instigate Investigations by U.N. Special Human Rights Mechanisms.

- The High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, and the Special Rapporteur on Children in Armed Conflict should immediately request permission of the Russian Federation to visit Chechnya and neighboring provinces and report to the next session of the Commission on Human Rights.

Adopt a Resolution at the Commission on Human Rights.

- The upcoming session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights should yield a resolution condemning the abuses being committed in Chechnya and calling on the Russian government to investigate these abuses thoroughly and bring those responsible to justice.

To the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe:

Deploy an Expanded OSCE Assistance Group in the Region.

On April 11, 1995, the OSCE established the Assistance Group to Chechnya. Its mandate, explicitly reaffirmed by all OSCE member states, including Russia, at the November 1999 Istanbul Summit, provides that it will, inter alia, "promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms," and "facilitate the delivery to the region by international and nongovernmental organizations of humanitarian aid for victims of the crisis, wherever they may be located." The Assistance Group enjoys "all possible freedom of movement on the territory of the Chechen Republic and also on the territory of neighboring subjects of the Russian Federation, if so required for the performance of its tasks." The size and composition of the Assistance Group, currently composed of six members, can be changed by decision of the Chairman-in-Office, in consultation with the Russian Federation and within constraints imposed by the Assistance Group's budget.

- As is foreseen under the existing Assistance Group mandate, the OSCE should immediately deploy an expanded Assistance Group delegation to Ingushetia: to gather evidence of violations of human rights and humanitarian law being committed in Chechnya; to report publicly on any such abuses and make recommendations to the Russian government to curb abuses and hold those responsible accountable; and to monitor the treatment of displaced persons and advise the Russian authorities and international agencies with respect to needed humanitarian assistance.
- In accordance with the 1994 Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, Articles 30 and 31, the OSCE must insist on Russia's obligations to investigate abuses committed by Russian Federation troops in Chechnya, including in Alkhan-Yurt and in the Staropromyslovski district of Grozny, and prosecute those found responsible. The OSCE should insist that Russia keeps the Chair-in-Office and the OSCE Permanent Council informed on progress in this regard.

To the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Bilateral Donors, including the Government of Japan:

Impose Conditionality on International Loans.

- IMMEDIATELY SUSPEND PAYMENT OF ALL PENDING LOAN INSTALLMENTS PAYABLE TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION FOR UNRESTRICTED GENERAL BUDGETARY SPENDING, INCLUDING PENDING WORLD BANK PAYMENTS UNDER ITS STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT LOANS. SIGNAL THAT SUCH PAYMENTS WILL NOT RESUME UNTIL THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TAKES MEANINGFUL STEPS TO LIMIT THE CIVILIAN TOLL IMPOSED BY ITS MILITARY OPERATION IN CHECHNYA. SUCH STEPS SHOULD INCLUDE INVESTIGATIONS OF ABUSES COMMITTED AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE; ACCEPTANCE OF AN INTERNATIONAL MONITORING PRESENCE IN INGUSHETIA AND FULL COOPERATION WITH ITS ACTIVITIES; AND MEANINGFUL STEPS TO CURB LOOTING AND THE DESTRUCTION OF CIVILIAN PROPERTY IN CHECHNYA.
- REFUSE TO NEGOTIATE ANY NEW LOANS OR TO RENEGOTIATE ANY EXISTING LOANS UNTIL THESE SAME STEPS ARE TAKEN.

TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE:

CONTRIBUTE TO AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE.

- THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SHOULD PROVIDE WHATEVER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO AN INTERNATIONAL MONITORING MISSION DEPLOYED TO INGUSHETIA.

COMMENCE LEGAL ACTIONS BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

- MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE SHOULD FILE INTERSTATE COMPLAINTS AGAINST RUSSIA AT THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

INSTIGATE A COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS INVESTIGATION.

- AS ENVISIONED BY ITS 1994 DECLARATION, THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS SHOULD INSTIGATE A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION INTO RUSSIA'S COMPLIANCE WITH ITS COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITMENTS.

TO THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES:

PRESS FOR RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT ACTION TO CURB ABUSES.

- PRESS THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO UNDERTAKE A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF ABUSES COMMITTED IN CHECHNYA AND TO HOLD THOSE RESPONSIBLE ACCOUNTABLE.
- PRESS THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO COOPERATE WITH THE DEPLOYMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL MONITORING MISSION IN INGUSHETIA.
- AS ENVISIONED IN THE DECEMBER 6 DECISION OF THE E.U. GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL, E.U. MEMBER STATES SHOULD IMMEDIATELY DISPATCH THEIR MOSCOW REPRESENTATIVES TO INGUSHETIA TO MONITOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE REGION. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE SIMILAR STEPS TO MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION.

BACKGROUND

The current military campaign in Chechnya started in September. It was sparked by a Chechen armed incursion into the neighboring republic of Dagestan in August and several bombings in Russia in September, which the Russian government blamed on Chechen forces.

After advancing quickly through northern Chechnya, taking several towns without a fight, including Chechnya's second largest city of Gudermes, Russian forces encountered fierce resistance as they approached the Chechen capital Grozny. In November, Russian troops fought hard to encircle the city and cut off supply lines from the south, with towns and villages to the south of Grozny the scene of very heavy fighting. By early December, Russian forces had more or less encircled Grozny.

Russian commanders initially ruled out a ground offensive into Grozny, in an apparent attempt to avoid repeating the mistakes of December 1994 and January 1995, when hundreds of Russian soldiers entering the city in columns of tanks proved to be easy targets for the Chechen rebels. Russian forces began a relentless bombing and shelling campaign on the city in late November 1999. On December 6, the Russian military announced an ultimatum to all civilians in Grozny to leave the city by December 11 or face "elimination." Leaflets dropped from Russian planes

instructed civilians: "Those who remain will be viewed as terrorists and bandits and will be destroyed.... Everyone who does not leave the city will be destroyed." The ultimatum was eventually retracted, apparently under pressure from the international community.

Countless civilians fell victim to the continuing bombing and shelling campaign. On various occasions the Russian government and military announced safe exit routes for civilians wishing to flee from the city but continued to target those very routes. An estimated ten to fifty thousand civilians, often the elderly, poor, and infirm, remained trapped in Grozny's basements.¹

In mid-December, Russian forces started the ground offensive on Grozny. In Grozny, Russian soldiers met fierce resistance from Chechen rebel fighters intimately familiar with the city. During the offensive, the number of casualties among Russian soldiers rose very quickly. In one episode reminiscent of the 1994-1995 offensive on Grozny, Associated Press and Reuters correspondents reported that, on December 16, a column of tanks trying to enter the center of the city was surprised, and Russian troops were slaughtered by Chechen fighters.² Maria Eismont of Reuters and Ruslan Musayev of the Associated Press said they had counted the bodies of more than one hundred Russian soldiers. The report was vehemently denied by the Russian government. In interviews with foreign and Russian journalists, however, numerous Russian soldiers who had fought in Grozny admitted that many soldiers from their units had died. Several soldiers described how each step on the streets of Grozny posed a threat as Chechen snipers were hiding all over the city and claimed the lives of many Russian soldiers.³ In mid-January, Chechen snipers killed General Malofeyev, one of the commanders of the invasion of Grozny, in a major setback for the Russian army. Russian troops were unable to recover his body until five days later.

The Russian government initially denied reports in the Russian and international media that claimed that the casualty rate among soldiers had soared. In mid-January, officials reported that 700 soldiers had died since the beginning of the fighting in Dagestan in August. On January 25, the Russian government said that in fact 1,173 soldiers had died. Many independent observers, however, believe even these numbers severely understate the real casualty figures, and some have estimated that as many as 3,000 Russian soldiers may have died in the Chechnya campaign so far.⁴

In early February, Chechen rebel forces abandoned Grozny. One group apparently tried to bribe Russian officers for a safe passage but walked into a mine field which left many rebels dead and many more wounded. On February 7, Russian Acting President Vladimir Putin claimed that his troops had taken control of all of Grozny. In an interview with a Spanish daily, Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov said that "for the time being we have given up [Grozny]."⁵

¹ See Human Rights Watch release, "Civilians in Grozny Facing Death, Possible Starvation," December 6, 1999.

² Ruslan Musayev, "Troops in tanks and armored personnel carriers move into Chechen capital and are beaten back by rebels," Associated Press, December 16, 1999.

³ Michael R. Gordon, "Troops in Grozny Measure Their Gains in Yards," *New York Times*, January 24, 2000.

⁴ Yevgenia Borisova, "Casualty Count Passes 1994-96 Levels," *Moscow Times*, January 28, 2000.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Russian Tricolor Raised in Grozny," *Moscow Times*, February 8, 2000. February 2000, Vol. 12 No. 2 (D)

The Staropromyslovski district is situated on the northwest side of Grozny and extends from it like a finger. It was one of the first districts of Grozny to come under Russian attack. The first Russian forces apparently entered the district in early or mid-December. According to media reports, the district was the scene of heavy fighting in the early days of the attack on Grozny in late December 1999. Russian planes and artillery reportedly subjected the district to fierce bombardments while rebels put up stiff resistance to Russian ground forces. On December 28, 1999, *The Washington Post* cited a Russian soldier as saying that three efforts to storm the district had failed.⁶ Chechen sources claimed that up to three hundred Russian soldiers were killed in Staropromyslovski district alone.⁷ The Russian army denies this claim.

Russian forces established control over most of Staropromyslovski district by January 18, although the media continued to report "pockets of resistance" and the presence of Chechen snipers in the district.⁸

SUMMARY EXECUTIONS AND "DISAPPEARANCES"

The Killing of Abukar Yevloyev, Saparbek Yevloyev, Minusa Ausheva, and Zeinap Gairbekova (December 22)

Seventy-nine-year-old Solongeri Yevloyev told Human Rights Watch that his neighbor Said-Akhmed had informed him about the deaths of three relatives and a neighbor.⁹ Human Rights Watch was unable to interview Said-Akhmed who had in the mean time returned to Grozny. Said-Akhmed reported that he had heard gunfire coming from the house of Abukar Yevloyev, aged sixty-seven, on December 22 at 2 p.m., but decided to remain in his home out of fear. Another neighbor went to the house later that day and found the bodies of Yevloyev and his nephew, Saparbek Yevloyev, aged thirty-six, shot to death in the courtyard. She reported the deaths to other villagers who then went to the house. They found an additional two bodies in the shelter in the backyard: those of Abukar's wife Minusa Ausheva, aged sixty-seven, and a neighbor named Zeinap Gairbekova, about sixty. Both had been shot to death. Zeinap Gairbekova's husband took away the body of his wife, and the other three bodies were put inside the family home to prevent them from being scavenged by animals, while attempts would be made to contact the Yevloyev family about the deaths. Before the family could be informed and the bodies could be buried, the house caught fire and the bodies were burned. The family has not been able to return to Grozny to recover the burned corpses.

The Killing of Dugurkhan Archakova and Aishat Archakova (December 28)

Twenty-seven-year-old "Issa A." (not his real name) lived in Ivanova settlement in Staropromyslovski with his divorced mother and sister.¹⁰ They were an extremely poor family: "My mother had only two front teeth, and as you can see I have no front teeth, that is how poor we were," Issa A. told Human Rights Watch. By his account, Russian forces moved into a chicken farm on nearby Terski ridge on December 17, and repeatedly shelled their home and other homes in the neighborhood in the following weeks. Russian troops had been told that there were only two families left in the area and that there were no fighters around. Because of the shelling of their home, which was repeatedly hit, the family moved in with some Russian neighbors on December 25.

On December 27, a Russian officer went to the neighbor's house and told them that the area was now free of fighters and that the shelling would stop. According to Issa A., "He guaranteed that everything would be fine." On December 28, fifty-six-year-old Dugurkhan Archakova, Issa A.'s mother, and his sister, thirty-three-year-old Aishat Archakova, went back to their home. At 3:45 p.m., Issa A. and his neighbors heard automatic gunfire coming from the house. The neighbors had seen eight or nine soldiers enter the home before the shooting and saw the house burning soon thereafter, but they had not informed Issa A. (who, as a young man, did not want to be seen by the soldiers) of what had happened until the breaking of Ramadan (a Muslim holy month) fast at about 5 p.m. After finding out what

⁶ Daniel Williams, "Assault on Grozny Stalled; Unexpected Resistance Slows Russian Offensive," *Washington Post*, December 29, 1999.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Michael R. Gordon, "Chechen Rebels Fiercely Attack Russian Forces," *New York Times*, January 6, 2000.

⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Solongeri Yevuloyev, Nazran, Ingushetia, February 4, 2000.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with "Issa A.," Nazran, Ingushetia, February 5, 2000. Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch*, February 2000, Vol. 12 No. 2 (D)

happened, Issa A. immediately ran to his home, but could not enter because of the raging fire. Issa A. told Human Rights Watch how he found the bodies of his mother and sister the next day:

That night, I just watched the house burning and collapsing. The next morning at dawn, the women looked everywhere. At last, in the house, we found them. I recognized my mother by her two [sole] front teeth. From my sister, only some small remains were left. The roof had fallen, and we took the remains of the two bodies out.... Mother was found right at the entrance of the house, the wall near the door was all damaged from bullets. My sister was lying next to her.

On the morning of December 31, Issa A. was gathering the burned remains of his mother and sister: "I was picking up the bones from among the pieces of slate [from the collapsed roof] and putting them in a basin." A group of soldiers drove up in an armored personnel carrier (APC), dumped the bones from the basin, and made Issa A. lie face down. They beat him with the butts of their guns, leaving many bruises on his body, before stealing his GAZ 53 truck. "I don't care so much about the truck, but am angry because they just walked over the bones," Issa A. told Human Rights Watch. "I didn't know what to do with the bones," Issa A. told Human Rights Watch. "After about a week, I put them in a canister after cleaning them, and brought them here to Ingushetia. On January 2, we buried them at Nazran cemetery."

The Killing of Abdulvahap Aslangeriev, Hijan Gadaborcheva, Ismail Gadaborshev, and Valentina Fotieva (January 10); and the "Disappearance" of Valera, Issa, and Visayit (January 1)

Forty-one-year-old Zainap Tangiyeva lived in Staropromyslovski district with her family, staying in the cellar of her parents' home and a stronger bomb-proof cellar in the neighborhood.¹¹ Zainap Tangiyeva described how her family and others were frequently harassed by Russian soldiers and how Russian soldiers repeatedly forced civilians to go out of the bomb shelter to recover the bodies of Russian soldiers who had been killed.

According to Zainap Tangiyeva, soldiers came to the bomb-proof cellar on the evening of December 27 and took six men, the youngest of whom was forty-eight, to recover the bodies of six soldiers who had been killed when their APC (Armored Personal Carrier) was hit. The soldiers returned on January 1, this time ordering three men, Valera, Issa, and Visayit (the eyewitness did not know their last names) to put on warm clothes and accompany them. The three men never returned to the cellar, and when relatives went to inquire about their whereabouts, the soldiers denied they ever took the men away from the cellar. On January 7, the Russian soldiers went again to the bomb shelter to get civilians to recover bodies, taking four old men and an old woman. The five returned more than three hours later and said they had been told to go to the kindergarten where they recovered five bodies of dead Russian soldiers. They also reported having been shot at repeatedly by snipers.

According to Zainap Tangiyeva's forty-five-year-old sister Fatima Tangiyeva, Russian soldiers suffered heavy losses in Staropromyslovski district and were constantly trying to recover bodies, coming to the bomb-proof cellar on six different occasions.¹² On one occasion, OMON¹³ (riot police) soldiers gave the civilians five minutes to decide who would go to recover bodies and threatened to throw grenades at the civilians if they did not cooperate. Soldiers apparently used civilians to retrieve the bodies of soldiers who had been killed in order to avoid the danger to themselves posed by the routine sniper fire from Chechen snipers and booby-trapped bodies. According to two residents of Staropromyslovski district, Russian soldiers would take Chechen women hostage and then force civilians to go to negotiate an exchange with the Chechen fighters of Russian corpses for the Chechen women.

Fatima Tangiyeva also told Human Rights Watch that Chechen fighters not only shot at those trying to retrieve the bodies of fallen Russian soldiers, but on at least one occasion also set a booby trap around the bodies of six Russian fighters near the house of Maskhadov. She said Chechen fighters also sometimes held the bodies of Russian soldiers and tried to exchange them for ammunition.

According to Zainap Tangiyeva, soldiers also repeatedly came to her family's house. One day, two masked soldiers came, and just looked around the house, asking how many people were staying in the cellar. They returned in the middle of the night, again masked, and said they came to check documents. On January 9, soldiers came to their neighbor's house and shot at things in the house, such as the refrigerator, the stove, and the furniture. They then went to Zainap Tangiyeva's house, where Zainap Tangiyeva recognized one of the soldiers as Tima (the eyewitness did not know his last name), who had come to the family's house before on several occasions. Soldiers again went to the bomb shelter on the evening of January 10 to get civilians to recover the bodies of Russian soldiers. They first wanted to take Zainap Tangiyeva's uncle but decided he was too old, and the uncle then decided to go stay with Zainap Tangiyeva's family in the small cellar to avoid being taken by the next group of soldiers. Zainap Tangiyeva accompanied her uncle to her parents house, but went back to the bomb shelter in the evening of January 10, leaving her parents, uncle, and an elderly neighbor at home. The family had decided they would try to leave Grozny the next day.

The next morning, January 11, Zainap Tangiyeva returned home to find the gates locked and smoke coming from the house. As she described:

We first went into the kitchen, and found our father lying near the bathroom. He was dead, with bullet wounds. Valentina [the elderly neighbor] was under her table [where she slept], also dead, there was blood near her and she had a bullet wound in the neck. The drawers [in the kitchen] were pulled out, the fridge was open.

They tried to enter the cellar, where Zainap Tangiyeva's mother and uncle slept, but were unable to do so because of the intense heat and smoke coming from the cellar. They later buried the bodies of Zainap Tangiyeva's father, seventy-five-year-old Abdulvahap Aslangeriev, and the neighbor, sixty-seven-year-old Valentina Fotieva, in the yard. The bodies of Zainap Tangiyeva's mother, sixty-seven-year-old Hijan Gadaborsheva, and her uncle, seventy-four-year-old Ismail Gadaborshev, have not yet been recovered from the cellar of the house where they are believed to be located.

Zainap Tangiyeva's sister, Fatima Tangiyeva, was interviewed separately by Human Rights Watch, and she gave an account of events which was entirely consistent with that of her sister. She also told Human Rights Watch how she found the bodies of her relatives:

On January 11 at 8 a.m., I was leaving for Ingushetia. We went with Galya, Zainap, and one more neighbor to our house to say goodbye. The gate was closed, which was very strange. We knocked several times, I cried: "Mama, Papa, Valya," but there was no answer. Zainap managed to get over the fence and I heard her crying: "It is all on fire here!" We went in. The door to the cellar was closed. We opened the door and saw thick smoke inside the cellar. We tried to put the fire out but failed. We went to the kitchen and further in, at the door to the bathroom, I saw my father. There was a wound in

¹²Human Rights Watch interview with Fatima Tangiyeva, Nazran, Ingushetia, February 3, 2000.

his neck. Then I noticed Valya [Valentina] in the same room. I went out and ran away. Our neighbor asked me why I crying. I said that all my family is killed. He said: "Hush, Hush. Soldiers will come and kill you as a witness." This neighbor then buried the two bodies in our garden.

The Killing of Mariam Goigova and the "disappearance" of Magomet Goigov, Risvan Taimaskhanov, and Khamid Khasiev (January 19)

According to thirty-three-year-old Petimat Goigova, her fifty-nine-year-old mother Mariam Goigova was injured by shrapnel from shelling in the Staropromyslovski district of Grozny on January 19.¹⁴ Mariam Goigova's thirty-one-year-old son, Magomet Goigov, and two neighbors, twenty-two-year-old Risvan Taimaskhanov and forty-five-year-old Khamid Khasiev, put the wounded Mariam Goigova in a wheelbarrow and tried to walk her out of Grozny to seek medical assistance. They went as far as the Eight Liniya (Boulevard), where they found two APCs, one of which had been damaged. According to a witness at the scene who later spoke to Petimat Goigova, the soldiers severely beat the three men, shot the mother, and then drove away with the three men.

On January 20 at about 4 p.m., a tall young conscript soldier came to the house of "Wakha R." (not his real name) and "Sultan P." (not his real name), and told the men that he had killed a wounded woman in a wheelbarrow, and that he would now kill them also. When the two men asked the soldier why he had killed the woman, he replied that she had begged, "Help me, I am freezing," and the soldier had walked over to her, said "I will help you," and shot her. The soldier said they had handed over three men to riot police forces (OMON). The soldier later left without harming the men.¹⁵

On January 20 at about 10 a.m., Petimat Goigova traveled to Grozny to find her mother, having received information that her mother had been injured. She ran into a local commander she said was named "Oleg," whom she believed was from the 205th division of the 58th Army. When Petimat Goigova explained that she was looking for her mother, "Oleg" refused to let her pass, saying that if she tried to sneak past, he would kill civilians. "Oleg" reportedly replied, "We are taking revenge for our dead comrades whose mothers also wanted to see them alive."

She then met a witness to the incident and understood from the description given that the woman in the wheelbarrow was probably her mother. The witness helped her sneak through the checkpoint, and they traveled together to the place where the incident took place. Petimat Goigova told Human Rights Watch what she saw:

I saw my mother in the wheelbarrow. Her hands were stretched along her body. She had blood on her stomach, probably from the shrapnel wounds. We couldn't stay long, so I kissed her on the cheek, took her in the wheelbarrow and hurried back. She had one gunshot wound to the head, it went from her lower cheek to the back of the head. There was a hole in the wheelbarrow behind the hole in her head. Her eye had fallen out, as if the bullet cut it.

On January 21, the family took the body out of Grozny in the wheelbarrow, walking five kilometers to reach the edge of town. She was buried in Nazran cemetery.

Petimat Goigova's sisters went to Mozdok military base and Chernokozovo, two places where Chechen men are believed to be detained by Russian military for "filtration," but could not find their brother Magomet Goigov and the other two men who "disappeared" in Russian custody. On January 25, Petimat returned to Staropromyslovski district to help the relatives of one of the "disappeared" neighbors, Khamid Khasiev, leave Grozny. They found the relatives shot dead in their yard. (See below)

The Killing of Kosym Reshiev, Natasha Chernova, Khava, Lyusya, and an unidentified man from Shatoi (January 19)

¹⁴Human Rights Watch interview with Petimat Goigova, Sleptovsk, Ingushetia, February 3, 2000.

¹⁵Human Rights Watch interview with Sultan P., Sleptovsk, Ingushetia, February 9, 2000; Human Rights Watch interview with Human Rights Sleptovsk, Ingushetia, February 9, 2000. 9 February 2000, Vol. 12 No. 2 (D)

Human Rights Watch interviewed “Lora S.” (not her real name) in an Ingush hospital where she was recovering from bullet wounds.¹⁶ On January 19, by her account, she was staying with three other women and two men in a cellar in Neftyanaya street in the Staropromyslovski district. In the afternoon, they heard machine gun fire outside the cellar. Soon, several shots were fired through the wooden door of the cellar. Khava (the eyewitness did not know her last name), aged about fifty, was wounded in the leg, and Lora S. also received some splinters in her legs. They yelled out to the soldiers, “Please don’t shoot us, we are local civilians,” and the soldiers ordered them to come out of the cellar with their hands up.

When they came out of the cellar, there were six soldiers in the yard. One had a grenade with the pin already pulled out, and wondered what to do with the grenade until another soldier told him to throw it out in the street. The soldiers accused the group of hiding Chechen fighters. However, the group denied the accusations, saying that they were only civilians. When an old man in the group asked, “Do we need our passports,” thinking the soldiers had come for a security check, the soldiers replied, “No, we don’t need it.” One of the soldiers asked for a cassette player, and Kosym Reshiev, one of the men staying in the cellar, said that he had a cassette player, and brought it out and gave it to the soldiers. The soldiers then asked if there were more civilians in the neighborhood, and the group pointed out where different families lived, pleading with the soldiers: “Our dear boys, please, please don’t shoot anymore.”

The soldiers then told the group: “Get back to the cellar and don’t show up [come out] until the evening.” Right after the group went back down into the cellar, the soldiers threw several hand grenades into the cellar. Lora S. cried to the soldiers: “What are you doing? You promised not to kill us!” All six of the civilians in the cellar were wounded by the grenades, and then the soldiers ordered them to come out of the cellar again. One of the women was so seriously injured that she couldn’t walk anymore.

When they came out of the cellar, Lora S. noticed the soldiers were the same ones who had talked to them a few minutes earlier. Lora S. told Human Rights Watch what happened next:

Then they started shooting at us from close range. When Natasha fell down she no longer had fingers on her hand. People lying around me were still moving. I was all in blood and brains from other people. I was also wounded in the right side of my chest and blood was coming out through my mouth. Then the soldiers decided that we were all dead and left.

Lora S. was the only survivor of the incident. She identified the five persons killed as Khava, a dress designer aged around fifty, Kosym Reshiev, about forty, Natasha Chernova, around fifty, Lyusya (the eyewitness did not know her last name), about forty-five, and an unidentified neighbor from Shatoi, aged about forty-five. Lora S. showed Human Rights Watch her bullet wounds on her lower left leg and her chest area, consistent with her account of the shooting.

The Killing of Said-Selim Tugoyev (January 20)

Saipudin Saadulayev, aged thirty-nine, lived in a cellar on Pereulok Borodina in Staropromyslovski district with three other young men.¹⁷ From January 18 to 19, Chechen fighters pulled out of his neighborhood, and Saipudin decided to invite two older men to stay in the cellar because he was afraid Russian soldiers would abuse them if only young men stayed in there.

On January 20 at about 3 p.m., the men heard a noise at the gate, and Saipudin Saadulayev went outside together with one of the older men, fifty-year-old Said-Selim Tugoyev. Said-Selim Tugoyev met two soldiers at the gates, and explained that the fighters had left the area and only civilians lived in the area. Suddenly, gunfire came from Russian troops on the street and wounded Said-Selim Tugoyev in the arm. Saipudin Saadulayev watched in shock as one of the two soldiers walked up to Said-Selim Tugoyev and “finished” him with a shot to the head. The soldiers then threw a grenade in Saipudin’s Saadulayev direction, but he managed to jump inside the cellar just before the explosion. The soldiers then left.

¹⁶Human Rights Watch interview with “Lora S.” undisclosed Ingush Hospital, Ingushetia, February 2, 2000.

Human Rights Watch interview with Saipudin Saadulayev, Ekavaya, Ingushetia, February 30, 2000. 12 No. 2 (D)

At about 11 p.m. that night, a group of soldiers returned to the yard of the house. The soldiers immediately threw a grenade into the cellar, and only then asked if anyone was alive. The men said they were alive and begged the soldiers not to shoot. The soldiers ordered them to exit the cellar, and checked their papers before inquiring about the corpse. The next morning, a neighbor came to inform them that many members of the Zubayev family had been killed, as well as four people at the home of Hamid Taramov, including Hamid Taramov, aged about seventy, Musa Gutsigov, aged thirty-eight, and an unidentified man and woman. (See below.) They buried the body of Said-Selim Tugoyev in the yard of the home on January 22.

On January 22, soon after the burial of Said-Selim Tugoyev, soldiers returned to arrest Saipudin Saadulayev and Sulieman Bisayev, who was also staying in the cellar. The men were first taken to Hamid Taramov's house, where the soldiers asked the men if they knew who had killed the people in Hamid Taramov's yard, and then proceeded to loot Hamid Taramov's home. Saipudin and Sulieman Bisayev were kept on the street and did not see the bodies in Taramov's yard. They were then taken to the Fifth Liniya [Boulevard], where they ran into a large and angry group of soldiers who asked why their captors had taken the two men alive, instead of killing them. Apparently, the soldiers were collecting the body of General Malofeyev, who had been killed days earlier by Chechen fighters while visiting troops in Grozny. While being led around by the soldiers, Saipudin Saadulayev saw soldiers looting and burning homes on Borodina street, and watched a military truck drive down with loot, including two oxen.

When the men arrived in Karpinsky district, according to Saipudin Saadulaev, they were joined by seven other men under arrest. They were then taken to a military camp near the Orthodox cemetery in Karpinsky, where they were put into a deep pit. A soldier entered the pit and began beating them, saying, "you dogs, you sheep, you were killing our comrades. Now we will show you!" Other OMON troops were watching from the top of the pit, laughing. After the beating, the soldiers ordered the men to remove their hats and poured water on their bodies. "It was cold and I was wet all over, and the water began to freeze," said Saipudin Saadulayev.

The next day, on January 23 at about 4 p.m., the nine men were taken out of the pit and put into a truck, handcuffed painfully to the railing. They were taken to another military camp between Grozny and Argun, where they were detained in a wire cage on the back of a small GAZ 53 military truck together with nine other men. The men were briefly questioned by a Ministry of Justice official before being put back on the truck: "It was very cold in the truck, even worse than in the pit. Our boots were wet. We had to stand up [because we were with so many], but the roof was too low to stand straight." At 2 a.m., a group of soldiers came and beat some of the men with their fists and rubber batons, taking two men's leather coats before leaving: "The whole night we had to warm each other, sharing one jacket," Saipudin Saadulayev said. The next day, Saipudin Saadulayev managed to secure his release by promising to return to Grozny and try to find a missing Russian soldier. Four of the eighteen men were released together with Saipudin Saadulayev, leaving thirteen of the men still in custody. Their fate is unknown. Saipudin Saadulayev knew the complete or partial names of the eight men arrested with him who remained in custody: Selim Meduyev, aged thirty; Sulieman Bisayev, aged twenty-five; a mentally disabled man named Sulieman, who was aged thirty-one; and others known only as Leche, Idriss, Waha, Hassan, and Turpal. Except for Sulieman Bisayev, the men were all from Karpinsky district of Grozny.

The Killing of Larisa Jabrailova and Heda (January 21)

Forty-year-old "Hedi L." (not her real name) told Human Rights Watch that she and two other women went to check on their houses in Staropromyslovski district on the morning of January 21.¹⁸ After checking two of the homes, they encountered a group of Russian soldiers on an APC on Pugacheva Street. When they asked the soldiers whether they could proceed, the soldiers said they would have to speak to their commander and check their documents. The women were taken to a two-story house which was in the process of being looted by Russian soldiers, where they were questioned.

¹⁸Human Rights Watch interview with "Hedi L.," undisclosed Ingush Hospital, February 2, 2000.

After being briefly questioned, a soldier told the women he was taking them to the MVD station for questioning. The soldier ordered the women into an APC, but they said they were afraid and would rather walk. The soldiers gave the women scarves and ordered them to cover their eyes. The women were taken to a destroyed house on Koltsova Street. When they asked why they were being taken there, the soldiers replied that the police were based there.

As they entered the yard of the home, the women let go of each other's hands and removed their blindfolds. Three soldiers, including one named Afonja (the eyewitness did not know the soldier's last name), had taken them into the yard. "At that moment, they fired at us," Hedi L. told Human Rights Watch. "One woman was only able to say, 'Don't shoot, we have children.'" The two women died immediately: Larisa Jabrailova, aged forty-three with two daughters, and an ethnic Kumyk woman named Heda (last name unknown) who had four children. Hedi L., herself seriously wounded, survived by pretending to be dead.

The soldiers proceeded to loot the belongings of the women. According to Hedi L.:

They checked the other two women for money or gold. When I fell, they turned me over face down. They took my gold ring and earrings. They checked me all over, and found 400 rubles in one pocket. It was tough for them to get my gold ring, and they were looking for a knife but couldn't find it. They tried again, and fortunately the ring came off.

After robbing the women, the soldiers piled mattresses on top of them, doused the mattresses with gasoline, set them on fire, and left the area. Fortunately, the mattresses were damp and Hedi L. was able to escape and crawl to a neighbor's house before losing consciousness. Through another neighbor, Hedi L.'s family in Ingushetia was informed and several family members came and brought her to Ingushetia. Human Rights Watch interviewed Hedi L. in Ingushetia, where she was recovering from her injuries. Human Rights Watch researchers were able to document her bullet wound and burn marks, which were consistent with her testimony. A second witness, fifty-three-year-old Anastasia K. (not her real name), was one of the relatives who traveled to Grozny to help move Hedi L. to safety.¹⁹ Anastasia K., confirmed that Hedi L. had told her the same account of her ordeal when they went to collect her in Grozny, and described the attempts by the families of the two women to recover their bodies, which have thus far been unsuccessful.

The Killing of Anzor Taimaskhanov, Lida Taimaskhanova, and Adlan Akayev (between January 21 and 25); and the "Disappearance" of Khamid Khashiev (January 19)

On January 19, Khamid Khashiev and two other men were detained by soldiers while transporting a wounded woman, Mariam Goigova, out of Grozny (see above for an account of the killing of Mariam Goigova and disappearance of the three men). When Petimat Goigova went to Grozny on January 21, she saw Khamid Khashiev's wife Lida Taimaskhanova, aged fifty-five, and his sixteen-year-old son Anzor Khashiev alive. On January 25, Petimat Goigova returned to Grozny together with Khamid Khashiev's brother Magomet Khashiev, aged fifty-eight, to try and find Khamid Khashiev and to take his family out of Grozny.

When they reached the home of Khamid Khashiev, they found the gate open. Magomet Khashiev related to Human Rights Watch what he saw when he entered the yard:

I entered the yard. First I saw Adlan [Akayev, aged forty-five] lying face down, they were all lying face down. He was lying close to the gate. Then I saw my sister [Lida Taimaskhanova] and nephew lying head to head, and I ignored Adlan then because they were my family. I came up to my sister and started to cry. They had white cloths tied to their arms [to signal they were civilians]. Lida's passport was lying next to her, Anzor's birth certificate was also there. Adlan's professional record book was there also.²⁰

The fact that the identity documents were lying next to the bodies may indicate that they were confronted by Russian soldiers and produced their identity documents for inspection, a routine practice, and were then gunned down. Magomet Khashiev said the bodies were frozen, suggesting that they had been killed a few days before. Petimat Goigova, interviewed separately from Magomet Khashiev, gave a similar account of the discovery of the bodies.

After discovering the bodies, Magomet Khashiev approached a group of soldiers camped on Epronovskaya Street to seek assistance in transporting the bodies out of Grozny. When the soldiers refused, Magomet Khashiev argued with the soldiers, accusing them of making his brother "disappear" and killing his sister and nephew. According to Magomet Khashiev, the local commander replied that they were taking revenge for the deaths of thirty-two soldiers from their unit. Magomet Khashiev attempted to seek the release of his brother, offering ten thousand rubles for his brother alive, or three thousand rubles for his brother's body if killed, and then left. Two or three days later, fighters of the pro-Moscow Chechen leader Bislán Gantemirov helped transport the bodies to Nazran, Ingushetia, where they were buried.

Human Rights Watch interviewed two family members who helped wash the bodies in preparation for burial, a traditional Muslim rite. Twenty-eight-year-old Jamalil Khasiev stated that Anzor Khashiev's body had knife wounds on his leg, left lung, arms, and neck, as well as some nineteen bullet wounds.²¹ He also believed the boy's jaw was broken. Sixty-year-old Khava Khasieva told Human Rights Watch that Lida Taimaskhanova's left arm was broken, and that she had a knife wound on her right thigh as well as many bullet wounds in her chest area.²² She said, "When they brought the bodies on January 28, they were twisted and we thought we could never make them straight. I wish nobody ever has to see corpses as we did." The family also produced the bloody clothing of the victims, with many knife and bullet marks, as well as the white armbands they were wearing and the bloodied passport that was found next to Lida, ripped by a bullet. Human Rights Watch obtained several photographs of the bodies which are consistent with the account provided by the family and Petimat Goigova. Khamid Khashiev's whereabouts remain unknown, although the family believes he was killed by Russian soldiers.

The Killing of Said Zubayev (January 19); of Zeinap Zubayeva, Ruslan Zubayev, Malikah Zubayeva, Alina Zubayeva, Mariet Zubayeva, Luiza Zubayeva, Eliza Zubayeva, Larisa Zubayeva, and Said-Magomet Zubayev (night of January 20); of Khamid Taramov, Idris Uspayev, Mussa Guchigov, and Saidi (night of January 21); and of Elza Kasayeva and her mother (January 21)

²⁰Human Rights Watch interview with Magomet Khasiev, Vozne Senskaya, Ingushetia, February 4, 2000.

²¹Human Rights Watch interview with Jamilil Hesiyev, Vozne Senskaya, Ingushetia, February 4, 2000.

²²Human Rights Watch interview with Khava Khasieva, Vozne Senskaya, Ingushetia, February 4, 2000. HRW 2000-4/20012 No. 2 (D)

“Wakha R.” (not his real name), a forty-seven-year-old professor,²³ and “Sultan P.” (not his real name), a forty-five-year-old director of a vocational school,²⁴ spent two months together in a cellar in the Staropromyslovski district of Grozny with the Zubayev family. Interviewed separately by Human Rights Watch, they gave a consistent account of sixteen deaths in four separate incidents in their neighborhood. They had visited these different sites and viewed the bodies in each case.

On January 19, Russian soldiers entered their neighborhood and began house-to-house checking. After the soldiers had checked the documents of the people in their cellar, sixty-eight-year-old Said Zubayev, the patriarch of the Zubayev family, announced that he was returning to his home: “The Russians have come, now we are free. Let us go home.” Said Zubayev left by himself, and an hour or two later, at about 3 p.m., his wife Zeinap Zubayeva and his daughter Malikhah Zubayeva decided to join him. They found Said Zubayev shot dead in the street on the way home, in an area which was then under Russian control. Wakha R. and Sultan P. heard the screaming, ran toward the scene, and then helped the women bring the body of Said to the Zubayev family home.

Sultan P. related how they then returned home, only to be again confronted by soldiers. “They put us on the floor with our hands on our heads. They started beating us with guns. Then they made us stand up and walk down the street. They put us against the wall and ordered us to take off our watches.” Just then, an officer walked over and intervened, allowing the men to go home, but warning them that if they went out again in the street, they would be shot. On January 20, Wakha R. and Sultan P. went to the Zubayev home in the morning and buried the body of Said in the yard. Several soldiers of the elite SOBR²⁵ unit (riot police) entered the yard during the burial, inquired about the death, and left. Wakha R. and Sultan P. returned to their cellar after the burial.

The next morning, on January 21, the two men decided to visit the Zubayev family to ask for some bread. In the yard, they came upon a gruesome scene. Wakha R. related to Human Rights Watch what he saw in the yard:

What I saw was awful. All the members of the family were shot. Judging from the bullet casings, they were shot from a heavy submachine gun. Malikhah and Luiza were holding their daughters. The house was still smoking, it had been burned. There were tracks of an APC in the yard. The gates were broken. Things from the house were thrown about, and all the luxurious things had been taken away. The house had been looted and the family had been killed.

They found the bodies of eight people in the yard:

- Zeinap Zubayeva, the wife of Said Zubayev, aged sixty-four;
- Malikhah Zubayeva, daughter of Said and Zeinap Zubayev, aged forty-five;
- Alina Zubayeva, daughter of Malikhah Zubayeva, aged eight;
- Mariet Zubayeva, second daughter of Said and Zeinap Zubayev, aged forty-three;
- Ruslan Zubayev, son of Said and Zeinap Zubayev, aged thirty-five;
- Luiza Zubayeva, wife of Ruslan Zubayev, aged thirty-three;
- Larisa Zubayeva, daughter of Ruslan and Luzia Zubayev, aged twelve; and
- Said-Magomet Zubayev, nephew of Said Zubayev, aged forty-seven.

The second daughter of Ruslan and Luiza Zubayev, eight-year-old Eliza Zubayeva, could not be found, but the two men believe that she was burned in the house. Sultan explained what they did next: “I put all the bodies in a pile, and covered them with canvas [and heavy things] so the dogs wouldn’t touch them.” They then heard soldiers coming and were forced to leave the yard. The men were too weak to bury the bodies after spending months in their cellar: Wakha R. told Human Rights Watch that he had lost fifteen kilograms in that period.

²³Human Rights Watch interview with Wakha R., Sleptovsk, Ingushetia, February 9, 2000.

²⁴Human Rights Watch interview with Sultan P., Sleptovsk, Ingushetia, February 9, 2000.

Wakha R. was convinced that Russian soldiers had killed his neighbors: "There is no doubt in my mind that they were killed by Russian soldiers. The Chechen fighters left the day before, and only Russian soldiers were there. Besides, there were the tracks of an APC in the yard."

The next day, on January 22, Wakha R. and Sultan P. went to the house of a close friend, Khamid Taramov, in Shefskaya Street. "Through the backyards, we went close to the house and looked into the yard. They saw four or five male bodies in the yard: Khamid Taramov, a seventy-year-old pensioner; Idriss Uspayev, a sixty-year-old doctor of pedagogics; Mussa Guchigov, aged about forty-eight; and Saidi, aged fifty-seven, all shot to death. The men could not approach closer: "We were too terrified to go into the yard, because the soldiers always drove down the streets." When Wakha R. later met Khamid P.'s wife Tumisa P., she told him that one of the bodies was headless.

When the two men left Grozny later on January 22, Wakha R. stopped by the home of fifty-year-old Elza Kasayeva on the Fourth Liniya [Boulevard]. He found her nude body inside her house, and was told by neighbors that she had been raped and shot by Russian soldiers on January 21. He was also informed that Elza Kasayeva's eighty-year-old mother, a Russian, had also been shot to death in the cellar, but did not go to view that body.

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*Human Rights Watch
Europe and Central Asia Division*

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