

## HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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HUMAN  
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# EU-Russia Human Rights Consultations Human Rights Watch Recommendations

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Human Rights Watch is pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing preparations for the April 17 EU-Russia human rights consultations.

As Russia prepares to enter a new political cycle, the EU should take full stock of Russia's deteriorating human rights record and commit to making human rights a core aspect of its partnership with the Russian government. The EU should ensure that the human rights situation in Russia is raised at all levels, including at the upcoming EU-Russia Summit in June.

At times the EU has resisted engaging Russia at the highest levels due to fears of upsetting the Russian leadership, jeopardizing energy and economic interests, and otherwise standing in the way for a constructive and smooth EU-Russia relationship. Russia may be a difficult partner, but it is capable of hearing criticism and taking steps to address EU concerns on human rights, just as it does in other key aspects of the EU-Russia relationship. It is important to note in this regard is that there are positive examples of Russia's cooperation with European institutions that resulted in human rights improvements in Russia, most notably Russia's overhaul of its criminal procedure code to bring it into line with Council of Europe standards on fair trial and due process.

Engagement at all levels is essential to ensuring the consultations are effective, lest they become an isolated dialogue with little if any resonance in the overall EU-Russia relationship and little or no bearing on the human rights situation. The EU could also do better to

ensure continuity by engaging in sustained, detailed, and rigorous interaction with the Russian government and by actively following up on specific issues between the twice-yearly consultation rounds.

This memorandum provides an overview and detailed action points on four priority issues: state curbs on independent civil society activism, implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgments on abuses in Chechnya, impunity for abuses in counterinsurgency operations in Ingushetia, and the need for effective drug dependence treatment to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

One of these, implementation of judgments on abuses in Chechnya by the European Court of Human Rights, is of particular relevance for the EU, as Russia's failure to fully respect these judgments undermines Europe's most effective human rights institution. It is therefore of crucial importance that the EU prioritize this in its agenda with the Russian government at all levels. We would be pleased to provide more information on this and the other issues detailed below.

### **State Curbs on Independent Civil Society**

In the past two years, some NGO interventions in advance of the EU-Russia human rights consultations have focused on how the 2006 NGO law and other measures have created a difficult working environment for human rights and other civil society activism. Many of Russia's foreign partners, the EU included, while concerned by the 2006 NGO law, wished to reserve judgment until they could see how the law would be implemented. Two years after it entered into force, the impact of the law and its implementing regulations is clear: together with a host of administrative measures, they are being used to harass organizations that work on controversial issues, may be capable of galvanizing public dissent, or that receive foreign funding. This harassment is an unmistakable part of the Russian government's efforts to weaken—in some cases beyond recognition—the checks and balances needed for an accountable government.

Previous submissions in advance of EU-Russia human rights consultations have described how the NGO law subjects NGOs to excessive government scrutiny and unlawful government interference, and places onerous documentation requirements

and unreasonable bureaucratic hurdles on Russia's 240,000 NGOs. The government does not target all NGOs equally. As noted above, it has focused on NGOs that receive foreign funding and are most outspoken on controversial topics of Russian government policy, such as the war in Chechnya or human rights more broadly, or on organizations that are in some way affiliated or viewed as supportive of Other Russia, the opposition movement associated with the political dissident Garry Kasparov.

Three NGO reports published in February—including Human Rights Watch's report, *Choking on Bureaucracy* [<http://hrw.org/reports/2008/russia0208/>]—have documented how the types of organizations described above are affected by the new level of scrutiny and control. The law grants state officials excessive powers to interfere in the founding and operation of NGOs. For example, the Federal Registration Service may reject registration applications or notifications of organizational and operational changes if the organization's "documents are prepared in an inappropriate manner" or if an organization's activities are considered objectionable. The Tyumen-based Rainbow House was denied registration because its objectives, to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people, were considered by the government to undermine the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation due to reduction of the population." Having exhausted all appeal mechanisms in Russia, the Rainbow House has submitted a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, challenging the denial of its registration.

The 2006 law and implementing regulations impose onerous reporting requirements on NGOs, especially relating to any foreign sources of funding. It gives the Federal Registration Service unlimited discretion to request documents for inspection and to interpret them, including for compliance with the constitution, laws, and "interests" of Russia in the broadest terms. The Registration Service has in some cases demanded all documents and communications produced by an organization in the last several years. The three recent reports mentioned above alone illustrate through eight examples how the Registration Service makes burdensome and intrusive requests of NGOs for documents, or interpreted NGO documents in an exceedingly arbitrary manner.

In Saint Petersburg, all of the organizations supported by the Dutch government fund MATRA were simultaneously audited last year, after one such organization, the Center of Enlightenment in Research Programs (CERP), came under the scrutiny of the local authorities. The Federal Security Service (FSB), moreover, thwarted CERP's attempts to hold seminars and other events by threatening the managers of the venue where the events were to take place. CERP was recently liquidated, ostensibly for conducting "educational" and not the "enlightenment" programs specified in its charter.

The law allows state officials to conduct intrusive, "planned" inspections of NGOs every two years. The Registration Service is also authorized to inspect NGOs in response to complaints by citizens, as well as in response to information suggesting violations from state agencies such as the Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the prosecutor's office, and the like. Organizations can, in effect, be under permanent inspection. For example, members of Memorial, one of Russia's most prominent human rights organizations, recently spent two years dealing with inspections and their consequences by the Federal Registration Service, only to learn this year that they will be inspected by the municipal registration service. The Chechen Committee for National Salvation (CCNS), an organization which collects and distributes information about the situation in Chechnya, was audited by the Registration Service in the spring of 2007 as part of a planned inspection. No violations were found. Four months later it was again inspected by the Registration Service in an audit prompted by the Federal Security Service. CCNS has filed suit against the Registration Service, challenging the legality of the unplanned inspection.

The 2006 law has a punitive dimension. The Registration Service may issue warnings to NGOs for a wide variety of violations, many of them quite minor, including not filing timely activity reports, errors in founding documents, and the like. In one case, the above-mentioned CERP was issued a warning in 2007 because statements it made in a project proposal indicating a need for police training on refugee rights were found to "undermine Russia's interests." Implementing regulations also grant the Registration Service the authority to petition for dissolution of an organization that has received as few as two warnings regarding the same violation. The three reports on Russia's civil society contain four cases that illustrate how Registration

Service warnings were either groundless or based on minor administrative violations. They also documented five cases of dissolution motions for minor infractions or where the Registration did not conduct basic due diligence such as inform the organization of its efforts to dissolve them, or confirm that the organization was in fact not operating. There appears to be no statute of limitations on such warnings. The NGO law is not the only tool wielded by the authorities against civil society organizations. Organizations that are working on particularly controversial subjects have been targeted for harassing tax inspections, inspections for fire code or labor code compliance, and police raids, and some have faced politically motivated criminal charges. The use of checks for software piracy as a means to disable or stifle NGOs has continued. The Samara affiliate of *Novaia Gazeta* stopped publishing in November 2007 because its computers were confiscated for alleged software piracy. The editor, whose family has been involved in the political opposition, is being investigated for software piracy by the fifth investigator to take up the cause. The editor was notified of the investigation nearly five months after the launch of the criminal investigation. In another case, one lawyer, whose organization provides legal support to NGOs, told Human Rights Watch how the authorities confiscated her organization's software, just to be sure, even after they produced authentic software licenses.

In some instances the harassment is orchestrated at the local, regional, and national levels. The European University, a Saint Petersburg university which was to train Russian elections monitors and conduct research as part of an EU grant, was recently audited by the Federal Registration Service, the fire safety authorities, and the local science committee. It was recently shut down because of fire safety violations, despite successive clean audits. The university also had to cancel the elections-related training because, according to the local science committee, the training was not compatible with its license. It then decided also to cancel its planned research to avert further troubles.

In addition, NGOs that work on human rights, are politically active, or that express or mobilize dissent are vulnerable to being targeted under the 2002 Law on Countering Extremist Activity (the anti-extremism law). The 2007 amendments to this law allow any politically or ideologically motivated crime, as well as certain forms of

defamation of public officials, to be designated as extremist activity. The law has already been applied in an arbitrary manner against political activists and voices critical of the authorities, such as in a recent case against an internet blogger in the Komi Republic. The blogger, who criticized police persecution of the local press, was charged with using mass media—his blog—to incite enmity or hostility against a social group, the police.<sup>1</sup> In a bizarre development which suggests that the authorities in fact presume that vocal civil society organizations or activists are extremist, the authorities now provide official certifications testifying to the non-extremist nature of a person or organization.

While it is true that Russia still has a large and active civil society, organizations that are most critical and that would be most likely to challenge government policy spend enormous amounts of time and money preparing for and coping with inspections, challenging warnings in court, mounting legal defense against dissolution, fighting other kinds of administrative interference, and fulfilling bureaucratic requirements.

The combined corrosive effects of these laws, regulations, and their implementation on civil society cannot be understated. We ask that the EU and its member states take every opportunity to raise concerns about the shrinking space for Russia's independent civil society with Moscow, and push Moscow to amend the laws, rules, and regulations which are being used to stifle civil society activity.

It is important the EU make clear that several of the NGO law's provisions and their implementation clearly violate international human rights standards, are more restrictive than NGO regulatory practices in Europe despite Moscow's statements to the contrary, and are intended to prevent the effective exercise of basic civil and political rights such as freedom of expression and association. Indeed, a Council of Europe panel of experts found, before the law's final passage, that the draft violated Council of Europe standards for best practices for the regulation of NGOs as well as the European Convention on Human Rights.<sup>2</sup> While the Russian government responded only partially to the Council of Europe experts concerns, members of the

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<sup>1</sup> "Blog Case Goes to Court," *Kommersant*, March 13, 2008, [http://www.kommersant.com/p866185/freedom\\_of\\_speech/](http://www.kommersant.com/p866185/freedom_of_speech/) (accessed March 14, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Sergei Strokan, "Strasbourg Assesses Russia's new NGO legislation" (*Sovet Evropy voshel v polozheniia*), *Kommersant*, February 15, 2006, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=649821> (accessed March 14, 2008).

Russian parliament and others made misleading public statements suggesting, incorrectly, that the law as adopted reflected Council of Europe concerns and was not substantially different from its counterparts in European states. The EU should call on the Russian government to adhere to its commitments to uphold freedom of expression and association.

Specifically, the EU should recommend that Russia:

- Amend the 2006 NGO law and its implementing regulations to remove the most restrictive and intrusive provisions, including those that allow the authorities to conduct unlimited inspections, attend all NGO events, and request the dissolution of organizations for failing to submit reports or other information;
- Remove the stifling oversight of international NGOs by the Registration Service. The NGO law now requires that international NGOs give advance notice of projects and their funding, and allows the Registration Service, with broad discretion, to ban projects or parts of projects;
- Streamline the registration process so that NGOs can register quickly, without having to expend human and financial resources that should be devoted to their substantive public interest work;
- Ensure Registration Service officials use their discretion to impose only those obligations and burdens on NGOs that are legal, strictly necessary, and proportionate, and that foster an environment in which civil society can operate freely;
- Develop and enumerate other possible methods of recourse at the Registration Service's disposal, short of liquidation, which can compel or help noncompliant NGOs to come into compliance.

### **European Court of Human Rights**

In a growing number of judgments—24 to date—the European Court of Human Rights has found Russia responsible for serious human rights abuses in Chechnya. The court determined that Russia was responsible for extrajudicial executions, torture, and enforced disappearances and confirmed the systematic nature of abuses in Chechnya. In every case adjudicated to date, the court found that Russia failed to conduct an effective investigation into the alleged abuses.

It has been just over three years since the court issued its first ruling on Chechnya. In these three years, while Russia has complied with its obligation to pay compensation in individual cases, it resists taking effective action to ensure an end to continuing abuses and to impunity for crimes. Although the number of enforced disappearances in Chechnya has decreased in recent years, Human Rights Watch continues to document grave abuses in Chechnya and other parts of the North Caucasus.

To date the EU has not fully seized the opportunity provided by the European Court rulings to promote accountability for past abuses and ensure an end to ongoing violations by pressing Russia on the crucial issue of full implementation of these judgments. We believe they provide a unique platform for the EU to engage effectively with Russia on the necessary changes in policy and practice that are required from Russia in order to fully comply with the court's rulings. Russia's effective implementation of these judgments will also help guarantee the integrity and efficacy of the European Court, which is the leading mechanism in Europe for ensuring that states uphold human rights commitments.

As a concrete first step towards Russia's implementation of European Court judgments, the EU should press Russia to immediately conduct meaningful investigations to identify and prosecute the perpetrators of the violations identified by the European Court, particularly in cases in which the court has identified senior officers, such as Major-General Yakov Nedobitko, Major-General Vladimir Shamanov, and Colonel-General Alexander Baranov, to be responsible for human rights abuses.

We also call on the EU to insist that Russia implement other individual and general measures necessary to rectify past and ongoing human rights abuses in Chechnya. Specifically, the EU should press Russia to:

- Pay in full the compensation and expenses as directed by the court ;
- Re-open investigations in those cases where the court has determined that prior investigations were inadequate and conduct them in a manner that ensures they are meaningful and effective;

- Undertake a thorough review and revision of domestic legislation and regulations regarding the use of force by military or security forces to ensure their compliance with human rights law;
- Conduct an in-depth inquiry into the conduct of investigations into abuses committed by Russian military servicemen, police and intelligence officials, and other forces in the Chechen Republic to establish why these investigations are so ineffective;
- Undertake an investigation to determine by what means secret detention has been allowed to occur routinely and on a large scale in Chechnya.

## **A Developing Human Rights Crisis in Ingushetia**

In the course of the recent year, the human rights situation in Ingushetia has deteriorated markedly. As of summer 2007, insurgency in Ingushetia—including attacks on public officials, law enforcement and security personnel, and civilians—has been on the rise by various militant groups with a loose agenda to unseat the Ingush government, evict federal security and military forces based in the region, and promote Islamic rule in the Northern Caucasus.<sup>3</sup>

Human Rights Watch condemns attacks on civilians and believes the Russian government must hold the perpetrators accountable, while ensuring them the right to a fair trial and due process under Russian and international law. However, law enforcement and security agencies are failing to ensure these rights. Their counterinsurgency practices increasingly involve extra-judicial executions, abductions, and acts of torture and cruel or degrading treatment. These practices violate Russia's domestic law and international human rights commitments. They are reminiscent of the infamous "counterterrorist practices" in Chechnya, antagonize local residents, and serve to further destabilize the situation in this Northern Caucasus republic.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the prosecutor of Ingushetia, Yuri Turygin, the number of attempts on the lives of military, police, and security servicemen in 2007 increased by 85 percent, compared with relevant statistics for 2006. "President of Inghshetia dismissed his government to keep his job" (President Ingushetii otpravil v ostavku pravitel'stvo, shtoby ostat'cya samomu), Newsru.com, March 12, 2008, <http://www.newsru.com/russia/12mar2008/ingushh.html> (accessed on March 12, 2008). Also, between July and November 2007, 24 ethnic Russians and other non-ethnic Ingush civilians were killed, allegedly by insurgents. Memorial Human Rights Center report, "Ingushetia 2007 – kuda dal'she?" (Ingushetia 2007 – What's Next?), February, 12 2008, <http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/index.htm> (accessed on March 12, 2008).

Memorial estimates that security personnel are responsible for between 11 and 15 extrajudicial executions of local residents in the past year alone.<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch documented several such cases during its research mission to Ingushetia in December 2007.

For example, on August 30, 2007, 20-year-old Islam Belokiev was killed in Nazran, Ingushetia's largest town. Belokiev was a trader at the local car market. When he was ready to go home on that day, several men sitting in a car parked by the market called out to him. They opened fire as soon as he turned toward them. According to numerous witnesses, Belokiev fell to the ground. The killers were joined by security personnel in masks and armored vests, and soldiers. Belokiev was still alive and bleeding heavily but the security forces on the scene, eventually numbering up to 80, prevented those who wanted to help him from approaching. At the same time witnesses report clearly seeing that one of the servicemen put a gun in Islam's hands and a grenade nearby. By the time local procuracy officials and doctors were allowed to enter the market, Belokiev was dead. After his death the procuracy filed charges against him for alleged membership in an illegal armed group. His killing has not been properly investigated and the perpetrators remain unpunished.<sup>5</sup>

Another example is the killing of Apti Dalakov on September 2, 2007 in the town of Karabulak. Dalakov and several other young local residents were surrounded in the street by three dozen armed personnel in face-masks and camouflage uniforms. Dalakov was frightened and started to run. According to credible witness reports, two of the servicemen caught up with him and opened fire. Dalakov was wounded and fell. One serviceman, dressed in civilian clothes and covering his face with his shirt, fired at Dalakov several times, including a final shot to the head, before placing a grenade in Dalakov's hand. Local police arrived at the scene of the killing, searched the unknown servicemen, identified them as Federal Security Service (FSB) officers and took them to the Karabulak police department. However, high-level officials of the Ingushetia branch of FSB arrived shortly thereafter and demanded that police

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<sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with a Memorial researcher, March 12, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch interviews, Ingushetia, December 28, 2007.

release the servicemen and return their weapons and the ammunition, including the bullet shells collected at the site of the crime.

No meaningful investigation has been conducted into the killing of Aпти Dalakov.<sup>6</sup> The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ingushetia was reprimanded by the then-presidential plenipotentiary in the Southern Federal District, Dmitry Kozak, for interfering with an FSB operation.<sup>7</sup>

The killing that created the greatest resonance in Ingushetia and caused vocal public protests was that of six-year-old Rakhim Amriev. Early in the morning of November 9, 2007, several streets in the village of Chemulga were surrounded by up to a hundred military and security personnel who came in armored personnel carriers and other vehicles. The Amrievs were awakened by the noise and heard a command via loud-speaker: “Women and children, come out!” By the time the four children and their parents got up and approached the door, three armed servicemen broke into their house and immediately opened fire. Rakhim Amriev was instantly killed; his mother, Raisa, was wounded. The family was then forced to leave the house, barefooted and dressed in only their nightclothes. The servicemen prevented them from taking Rakhim Amriev’s body. The servicemen started shooting and throwing grenades at the empty house. The servicemen demanded that a local administration official testify that there were rebels in the house and that he saw cross-fire. When the official refused to do so, he was fired on a technical pretext. The day after Rakhim Amriev’s killing, the procuracy opened a criminal case “on the death of a child during an operation.” More than four months after the incident, the investigation is still ongoing.<sup>8</sup>

Law enforcement officials also violently detain, without a warrant, those suspected of insurgency and hold them in incommunicado detention without informing relatives of the detainee of their whereabouts. According to Memorial, 33 civilians were abducted in 2007; five of them subsequently “disappeared,” and one was

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<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch interviews, Ingushetia, December 21, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Denis Stukal and Alexei Titkov, “Political Life in the Regions” (*Politicheskaia zhizn’ v regionakh*), <http://regionalistica.ru/obzor/weekly/sep1007/polit100907/> (accessed on March 12, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch interviews, Ingushetia, December 21, 2007.

killed.<sup>9</sup> Many of those abducted are also tortured. Human Rights Watch has documented several cases of abduction in Ingushetia.

For example, on August 8, 2007, 30-year-old Ibragim Gazdiev was abducted and disappeared. According to witnesses, his car was stopped by several armed servicemen in masks and camouflaged uniforms in the town of Karabulak. After checking his identification documents, they forced him into one of their vehicles and drove off. According to Gazdiev's family members, two months earlier their house was searched by FSB officials looking for evidence of collaboration with insurgents. Nothing was found. The investigation into Gazdiev's abduction has not yielded any results and he remains missing.

In a particularly disturbing case, on September 8, 2007, Murad Bogatyrev was abducted by several armed servicemen from his home, which, according to his family, was searched without a warrant. Bogatyrev's relatives were able to trace him promptly to a local police department. After waiting some time by the entrance, they eventually saw Bogatyrev's naked body carried out. Police told them Bogatyrev had died of a heart attack. However, when his relatives received Bogatyrev's body, they found multiple traces of torture. The procuracy eventually opened a criminal case of "abuse of office" in relation to Bogatyrev's death. However, despite a solid base of evidence, including a forensic medical report registering bodily harm and photographs taken by relatives, the investigation has to date not yielded any meaningful results.

Distressed by abductions, disappearances, and killings, news of which spread quickly among the republic's population of 300,000, people in Ingushetia organized several protest rallies between September 2007 and February 2008. With the president of Ingushetia, Murat Zyazikov, consistently referring to the situation in the republic as normal and stable, the local authorities did their utmost to prevent the protests from happening and silence media coverage. Local officials refused to grant protest organizers permission for the rallies, and the rallies were brutally dispersed.

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<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Memorial staff, March 12, 2008.

In a striking move to intimidate coverage of the human rights situation in Ingushetia, on the night of November 23, armed men in masks abducted Oleg Orlov, head of Memorial, and three television journalists who were in Nazran to monitor a demonstration scheduled for the next day. The attackers put black plastic bags over the four men's heads and drove them to the Ingush border with Chechnya. There they beat the four, threatened to execute them, told them to leave Ingushetia, and then abandoned them. Two of the three journalists were hospitalized for their injuries.<sup>10</sup> The investigation into this case has not yielded meaningful results.

During the next protest rally, on January 26, 2008, 10 journalists and two human rights defenders who were covering the event were arrested by police. Journalists who were not from Ingushetia suffered ill-treatment, were held for several hours, and were finally expelled from Ingushetia. Two local journalists, Said-Khusein Tsarnaev and Mustafa Kurskiev, spent the night at the Nazran Police Department without access to counsel, food, or water. They were threatened with groundless arson charges but released the next evening, owing to strong pressure from Russian and international human rights organizations and media.<sup>11</sup>

Servicemen and police officers responsible for human rights abuses in Ingushetia have not been brought to justice. If criminal cases into abuses are opened at all, the prosecutors fail to mount meaningful investigations. Many of those who have sought justice, as well as eyewitnesses to the abuses, have been subjected to verbal and physical threats. As a result, the number of applications from Ingushetia residents to the European Court of Human Rights is steadily growing. In order to prevent Ingushetia from turning into a full-blown human rights crisis, prompt and effective measures must be taken by the Russian government.

The EU should call on Russia to:

- Promptly bring counterinsurgency efforts in line with Russia law and international human rights commitments;

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<sup>10</sup> For more detail, see "Russia: Prosecute Attack on Rights Activist, Journalists," Human Rights Watch news release, November 24, 2007, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/11/24/russia17407.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> For more detail, see "Russia: Journalists Detained to Stop Reporting on Ingushetia Protest," Human Rights Watch news release, January 27, 2008, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/01/27/russia17893.htm>.

- Immediately stop the practice of extra-judicial executions, enforced disappearances, abductions, and other abuses perpetrated in particular by security services, military, and law-enforcement agencies;
- In cases of arrest, ensure that all procedural guidelines are fully observed and family members are provided adequate information on the status and whereabouts of their arrested relatives;
- Ensure meaningful accountability mechanisms to bring perpetrators of serious abuses to justice and ensure transparency regarding investigations and/or prosecutions undertaken, including their outcome;
- Foster a favorable climate for journalists and human rights defenders to do their work in the region;
- Ensure access to the region for international monitors, including the UN Working Group on enforced and involuntary disappearances and the Special Rapporteurs on torture and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in full agreement with the requirements for conducting visits that these procedures' terms of reference set forth.

## **HIV, Youth, and Drug Dependence**

Hundreds of thousands of people in Russia, many of them youths and young adults, are dependent on drugs and at immediate risk of HIV infection. While Russia has made considerable progress expanding access to antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for people living with HIV, its efforts to ensure that injection drug users have access to effective drug dependence treatment services—a key factor in both general HIV prevention and treatment for injection drug users—have fallen far short. Ultimately, Russia will not be able to stop its injection drug use-driven HIV epidemic without offering proven drug treatment programs.

An estimated 65 to 80 percent of all persons living with HIV in Russia and more than 10 percent of injection drug users in Russia are HIV-positive. Studies in many countries worldwide have shown that methadone maintenance therapy helps reduce HIV infections as it enables many patients to stop using illicit drugs altogether or helps them adopt less risky injection behavior. Maintenance therapy has also been shown to play a central role in aiding drug users in accessing and adhering to ARV treatment. Yet, Russia continues to refuse to make maintenance therapy available to

drug dependent people—worse, it has outright banned the use of methadone for treatment purposes. As shown by our 2007 study, *Rehabilitation Required: Russia's Human Rights Obligation to Provide Evidence-based Drug Dependence Treatment* [<http://hrw.org/reports/2007/russia1107/>], the drug treatment services that are offered are insufficiently accessible, incomplete, and often not based on scientific evidence.

Human Rights Watch welcomes EU member states' commitment to fighting HIV and AIDS in Russia. It calls on the EU to actively engage Russia in dialogue over the importance of introducing maintenance therapy as part of its HIV/AIDS strategy.