Russian Federation[1]

IHF FOCUS: elections and referenda; freedom of expression and the media; judicial system; political killings; torture, ill-treatment and police misconduct; prisons and detention facilities; intolerance, xenophobia, racial discrimination and hate speech; asylum seekers and immigrants; social and economic rights; trafficking in human beings; human rights defenders; Chechnya.

In 2003, human rights developments in the Russian Federation were dominated by three issues: the run up to the presidential elections in March 2004, the Duma parliamentary elections in December and the election of Akhmed Kadyrov, a pro-Moscow former head of the Chechen administration in the October presidential election in Chechnya. The legitimacy of the election of Kadyrov, as well as a March referendum in Chechnya on a new local Constitution, was disputed by international organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe—as well as the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG) and the IHF.

In the run-up to the presidential election, the government tightened its grip on the media and in June closed down the last independent nationwide TV station, TVS, itself the remnants of TV-6 that was forced off the air in 2002. TVS was abruptly replaced by a state owned sports station. Following the Duma elections, the OSCE criticized government control over the media, which, it said, gave unequal support to pro-governmental parties and seriously distorted the outcome of the elections.

The effect of the armed conflict in Chechnya continued to be felt in Moscow during the year. On 2 July, two female suicide bombers blew themselves up in the outskirts of Moscow, killing 16 people queuing up for an outdoor rock festival.[2] On 9 December, a woman who the authorities said was a Chechen, blew herself up outside the Hotel National. She was said to have been en route to the Duma located just 200 meters away. The blast killed six people and injured 14 others. The attacks were followed by a tightening of document checks in Moscow of people with Chechen and Caucasian appearance and led to an increase in reported incidents of discrimination against these minority groups. Sporadic instances of violence took place in Chechnya and the surrounding republics.

In December changes were made to the Criminal Code and a specific definition of torture was finally introduced in article 117. The new definition is generally considered better protection against torture, however it still fails to mention the involvement of officials that commit acts of torture, which is part of the international definition of torture.

Journalists, politicians and human rights defenders continued to be targets of threats, violent attacks and kidnappings. Reporting on Chechnya and on corruption were the main subjects they were persecuted over. In at least two cases of such persecution, the victims had been involved in investigating Federal Security Bureau (FSB) interference in the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow blamed on Chechens separatist fighters. The MHG's local representative in Chechnya, Imran Ezhiev, was kidnapped in March by unknown men in Chechnya and held for three days. Ali Astamirov, a local Chechen Agence France Presse journalist was kidnapped in Ingushetia in July and has not been seen since.

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[1] Written by Anna Olin, consultant to the IHF.

[2] See also IHF, "IHF Condemns Moscow Concert Attack, Appeals to Authorities Against Acts of Reprisal," 7 July 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=4104.

The obligation for Russian citizens and for people of other nationalities who resided in Russia to carry identification documents at all times was ruled on by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). In the case of *Smirnova v. Russia*, the ECtHR held that official seizure of an internal passport could be a violation of article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)—right to a family life—if not done in accordance with the law. It established that Russians had to prove their identity "unusually often" and deprivation of a passport could therefore represent "a continuing interference with the applicant's private life."[3]

Elections and Referenda[4]

State Duma Elections

On 7 December, elections were held to the State Duma, one of the two houses of the Federal Assembly, which is the Russian Parliament. Of the 450 deputies in the Duma, half are elected according to single mandate district constituencies and the other half are allocated according to political party blocs that gain more than 5% of the vote.

The OSCE stated after the election that the election process was, in principle, well administered but that there were widespread abuses of executive authority and state resources by pro-government parties. "Overall, the pre-election campaign was characterized by unequal opportunities afforded to candidates and political parties in the media," the OSCE stated. The whole democratic election system was said to be jeopardized because of media bias (see below).[5]

Prior to the elections, people who supported opposition parties financially were arrested. The most prominent of them was the CEO of the oil company Yukos, Mikhail Khodorkovsky. State media featured widespread criticism of the so-called "oligarchs" during the campaign and also criticized the opposition parties that had received funding from them: the liberal parties Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces (SPS). All political parties, therefore, did not compete on equal terms and Yabloko and SPS fell short of the required 5% minimum and failed to get their parties into the Duma according to the party bloc allocation system. Together the two parties managed to secure a handful of places according to the single mandate constituencies allocation system.

Other deficiencies observed by the OSCE during election day were: failure to guarantee voter confidentiality in some districts and petty mistakes when registering candidates which ultimately led to the disqualification of that candidate.

The Communist Party (KPRF) alleged that the party that had gained the majority, United Russia, had meddled with the computerized vote counting process in order to prevent the two liberal parties from reaching the necessary 5%-threshold, which was necessary for being represented in the Duma. The authorities did not launch an investigation into these allegations. As a result, the only real "opposition party" after the election was KPRF.[6]

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[3] *Smirnova v. Russia*, Application No. 46133/99 and 48183/99, 24 October 2003.
[4] For the March referendum and October presidential election in the Chechen Republic, see section on Chechnya, below.
[5] OSCE/ODIHR, *Russian Federation – 7 December 2003 Election to the State Duma, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, 27 January 2004, at www.osce.org.
[6] Ibid.

The rigid registration rules for voters caused further concern. Some minority groups were effectively barred from voting because they were unable to obtain permanent registration despite being legally entitled to do so. This problem especially affected the Meskhetian Turks in the Krasnodar Krai region.[7]

Freedom of Expression and the Media

"Spy Mania"

In 2003, Russian authorities continued their efforts to prosecute individuals accused of espionage.

- Igor Sutyagin was jailed in 1999 on charges of high treason for allegedly passing classified military information to foreign citizens though the material he used for his research project was public. In 2001, a Kaluga court held that the case was not built on sufficient evidence and sent it back to the FSB for further investigation. During the year, Igor Sutyagin's defense lawyers managed to get the case transferred from a Kaluga court to a Moscow City Court. In October a jury trial was agreed upon by the court. The hearing was closed to the public.[8]

- Valentin Danilov, a Krasnoyarsk-based physicist, was accused of spying for China when he was arrested in early 2001. He was accused of having transferred information about space technology to China. He maintained that he had only used public information. The case was pending before a Krasnoyarsk court for several years before Danilov finally was acquitted by a jury trial in December 2003. The acquittal was seen as a major setback for the FSB.[9]

The Case of TVS

After the state-controlled energy company, Gazprom, took over the independent television station, NTV in 2001, the only other nationwide, independent television station in Russia was TV-6. In early 2002, TV-6 was forced off the air as a result of a legal process concerning insolvency amid allegations that the case was politically motivated. The former general director of TV-6, together with a team of journalists from that station and a group of investors, joined forces with a non-profit group called Medium-Socium and successfully submitted an air-frequency tender for a new station. The company's new station, TV Spektrum (TVS) went on the air on 1 June 2002. The ratings of the new station were poor and it failed to bring in enough advertising revenue.

In May the authorities disconnected TVS from the Moscow cable network, which meant a further drop in advertising income. In June, a year after it went on the air, the Press Ministry abruptly took it off air and replaced it with a state-owned sports station citing its lack of profitability. In an official statement, the Press Ministry said the station was taken off the air because of financial difficulties and to protect viewer's interests. However, many observers

[7] Ibid.
[8] It took the jury three hours to decide to convict Sutyagin for state treason in the form of espionage on 5 April 2004 and the judge sentenced him to 15 years in prison. *Moscow Times,* "Sutyagin found guilty of treason," 6 April 2004 and BBC news online, "*Russian gets 15 years for spying,*" 7 April 2004.
[9] Moscow Times, "Danilov Acquitted by a Jury," 30 December 2003.

interpreted the action as the final step to return all national television broadcasters to state control. Others accused Mikhail Lesin, the media minister, of orchestrating the closure due to personal business interests.[10]

Harassment of Independent Media and Journalists

In the run up to the Duma elections in December, and most importantly to the presidential election in March 2004, the authorities tightened their grip on the independent media. Certain subjects proved to be especially sensitive, such as the federal forces' behavior in Chechnya, allegations of corruption against officials and criticism of President Putin.

In February, after publishing a series of articles criticizing President Putin, the opposition paper *Novye Izvestia* was temporarily closed down. The international organization, Reporters Without Borders, viewed the closure as politically motivated and linked to the forthcoming elections.[11] The Glasnost Defense Foundation reported the death of ten journalists and up to 100 physical attacks against journalists during the year.[12] Many journalists practiced self-censorship.

- Dmitry Shvets, co-owner and deputy managing director of TV-21 in Murmansk was shot and killed as he got out of a car outside the station's offices. The station had recently broadcast criticism of the city government and of the government's candidates in forthcoming city elections.[13]

- On 18 July, journalist Alikhan Guliev was shot twice in the back when entering his Moscow apartment. The year before, Guliev had received death threats after covering the presidential elections in the Ingush Republic. Since moving to Moscow, he had covered the Chechen conflict as a freelancer for TV Centre and for the newspaper, Kommersant.[14]

- On 9 October, Aleksey Sidorov, editor in chief of the newspaper *Toliatinskoe Obozrenie*, was stabbed to death outside his apartment building in Toliatti, in the Samara region. Sidorov had succeeded Valery Ivanov as editor in chief of the newspaper after Ivanov was shot in the head eight times in April 2002. Ivanov's death as well as Sidorov's were clearly linked to the newspaper's investigative reporting, which covered organized crime, drug trafficking and corruption. Following an investigation into Sidorov's murder, however, the local police concluded that the killing was unconnected to Sidorov's journalistic work. Police later arrested and charged a local factory worker with the killing. Observers and Sidorov's family remain skeptical that the right assailant had been caught. The murder of Valery Ivanov remained unsolved even though his colleagues at the newspaper were convinced the murder was connected to the newspaper's investigative work.[15]

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[10] US State Department, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2003 – Russian Federation*, 25 February 2004, at www.state.gov.
[11] Reporters without Borders, "Closure of Opposition Newspaper Noviye Izvestia," press release, 23 February 2003, at www.rsf.org.
[12] Glasnost Defence Foundation, year statistics, at www.gdf.ru.
[13] Reporters Without Borders, "TV Station Owner Shot Dead in Murmansk," press release, 21 April 2003, at www.rsf.org.
[14] Reporters Without Borders, "Journalist Killed in Moscow," press release 23 July 2003, at www.rsf.org.
[15] Committee to Protect Journalists, "RUSSIA: CPJ concerned about investigation into journalist's murder," 21 October 2003, at www.cpj.org.

Chechnya remained the most precarious region—and subject—for journalists to cover.

- Ali Astamirov, a local Chechen Agence France Presse journalist, was kidnapped in Nazran, the capital of Ingushetia, in July by unknown armed attackers and has not been seen since. Prior to the kidnapping, Astamirov had reportedly received threatening phone calls. The local Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation into the case but at the time of writing no progress had been made.[16]

Election Law and Media During Elections

Legislation determining electoral procedure prescribed that media outlets must provide free broadcast time for all political parties on equal conditions.

In 2002 a new law was passed, "the Law of Basic Guarantees," which sought to limit negative campaigning in elections as well as to define the media's participation to covering a campaign as opposed to engaging in it. The law limited the amount of time and/or space the media could devote to one candidate and stated that journalists may only report objective facts but not draw any conclusions from these facts. The provisions were used to discipline or sanction a number of journalists and media outlets.[17] For example, at the end of September, two Moscow weekly magazines, *Kommersant Vlast* and *Tverskaia 13*, were given their first official warnings (a media outlet was allowed two warnings before it was closed down) after they had published articles on the Moscow mayoral election. *Kommersant Vlast* had published an article that contained judgments on a candidate in the election, while *Tverskaia 13* reported on a press conference given by Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov but did not write about other candidates.[18]

In September, Duma deputies and journalists appealed to the Constitutional Court to overturn certain clauses of the law. Approximately one month before the Duma election, the court clarified some of the issues and it was generally understood to have relaxed the initial strict interpretation. However, there were concerns that the effect of the Constitutional Court decision was minimal because it came too late in the election process.[19]

Through its systematic monitoring of the media in the month leading up to the Duma election, the OSCE concluded that the majority of media attention was focused on the activities of President Putin, from which United Russia and other pro-presidential parties undoubtedly benefited. The OSCE found that although the free time designated to the parties by election law was divided fairly, state-governed stations openly supported United Russia and gave negative coverage of opposition parties, particularly the KPRF.[20]

Judicial System

On 10 October, the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation adopted a resolution instructing Russian courts to apply recognized principles and norms of international

[16] Reporters Without Borders, "AFP reporter kidnapped in Ingushetia," press release, 6 July 2003; "Reporters Without Borders urges the French President to raise case of journalist kidnapped in Ingushetia," 2 April 2004, at www.rsf.org.
[17] OSCE/ODIHR, op.cit.
[18] *The Guardian*, "Russian media warned under strict newlaw," 2 October 2003.
[19] OSCE/ODIHR, op.cit.
[20] OSCE/ODIHR, op.cit.

law as well as international treaties, including human rights documents, in making decisions.[21] This was a welcomed addition to the Russian judicial system since in practice lower courts rarely applied international law.

In December, amendments to the Criminal Code were enacted by the government. The changes were considerable and they were seen to affect the very concept of crime, guilt and punishment. The most significant amendment was the introduction of a definition of torture to the Criminal Code (see below). Other changes included broadening the right to self-defense, revising the notion of repeated crime, abandoning the confiscation of property punishment, reducing the minimum term of imprisonment and limiting the grounds for juvenile imprisonment.[22] The amendments also criminalized human trafficking, organizing and recruiting for prostitution and on distribution of child pornography.[23]

The introduction of a jury system continued during the year. By the beginning of 2004, the jury system existed in most regions including the city of Moscow. In Chechnya, the introduction of jury trials is planned for 1 January 2007. Even though the jury system was welcomed by defendants, defense lawyers and the public, the procedure was used in few cases. However, in those trials heard by a jury, the acquittal rate rose dramatically: 15% of defendants were acquitted as opposed to 0.8% in non-jury trials. For example, in December a jury acquitted Valentin Danilov, who had been charged with spying for China and according to observers the acquittal was credited to the jury system.[24]

There were trials that appeared to be politically motivated.

- Mikhail Trepashkin, a lawyer and former FSB official was arrested in October and charged with disclosure of state secrets and illegal possession of a handgun. The trial was closed to the public. Trepashkin had been involved in the commission to investigate the FSB involvement in the apartment bombings of 1999. He had worked as a consultant for the commission and his arrest in October came just one week before he was due to represent the family of one of the victims of the apartment bombings. The arrest was cause for concern over the arbitrariness of the Russian judicial system and the extent of FSB influence.[25]

The ECtHR handed down judgments against Russia. In October, in the case of *Rakevich v. Russia*, the ECtHR ruled that Russia was in breach of article 5 of the ECHR which guarantees the right to liberty and security of the person. The case concerned confinement by force of a mentally disturbed person. The ECtHR stated that even if Ms. Rakevich's psychological condition may have been serious enough for emergency confinement in a mental institution, the way in which she had been confined—she had been held for 29 days, instead of the statutory five days—was not according to the law and the authorities were therefore in breach of article 5(1). Moreover, Russia was also considered to have violated article 5(4) that sets out the right for the applicant to have the lawfulness of her detention decided by a court. Such independent legal remedy did not exist in the Russian laws regulating psychiatric treatment.[26]

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[21] The resolution is available in English at http://www.supcourt.ru/en/resolution.htm.
[22] Moscow Helsinki Group, "Russian Legislation Now Features the Definition of Torture," at www.mhg.org.
[23] US State Department, op.cit.
[24] Ibid.
[25] US State Department, op. cit.
[26] *Rakevich v. Russia*, Application No. 58973/00, 28 October 2003.

In the other Russian cases that the ECtHR ruled on during 2003, the Russian state was found to have violated the ECHR in all cases. The violations were mainly of article 6(1), the right to a fair trial, and had to do with non-compliance with rules on participation of lay judges in criminal trials,[27] length of criminal proceedings,[28] supervisory review of final and binding judgment[29] and prolonged non-enforcement of a court decision.[30]

Political Killings

Throughout Russia, there were several killings of politicians, some of which were believed to be politically motivated. Two individuals active in an independent commission to investigate the role of the FSB in the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow were killed.[31]

- The most prominent murder was the case of Duma Deputy and Liberal Russia party Co-chair, Sergey Yushenkov, who was shot and killed outside his home in Moscow on 17 April. Yushenkov was a severe critic of the Putin administration, especially its operation in Chechnya and had set up the independent commission to investigate the 1999 apartment bombings. At the time of his untimely death, Yushenkov was involved in yet another parliamentary inquiry related to the Chechen problem, namely into the "Dubrovka" hostage crisis of October 2002. Following the first court hearing into the murder, six persons were sentenced, including a fellow Liberal Russia party co-chair Mikhail Kodanev.

- In July, Duma deputy and deputy editor of the national newspaper, *Novaia Gazeta*, Yuri Shchekochikhin died under suspicious circumstances. He allegedly suffered a fatal allergy attack even though he was not known to suffer from any allergies. Shchekochikhin was, together with Yushenkov, one of the initiators of the investigation into the 1999 apartment bombings.

Torture, Ill-Treatment and Police Misconduct

The use of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment was widespread in Russia and accounted for some of the most serious human rights violations in the country.

On 10 July, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) made a statement condemning the continued use of torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement agents and federal forces in the Chechen conflict. The allegations of ill-treatment and torture were made against official and unofficial places of detention and particularly against the Khankala military base outside Grozny. The CPT traveled to Chechnya during 2002 and 2003 and was especially concerned with the repeated "disappearances" in which federal forces were alleged to have been involved. The Russian federal authorities were also seriously criticized for not taking sufficient action to bring those responsible to justice, a conduct "which can only contribute to a sense of

[27] *Posokhov v. Russian Federation*, Application No. 63486/00, 4 March 2003.
[28] *Smirnova v. Russian Federation*, Application No. 46133/99 and 48183/99, 24 July 2003.
[29] *Ryabykh v. Russian Federation*, Application No. 52854/99, 24 July 2003.
[30] *Timofeyev v. Russian Federation*, Application No. 58263/00, 23 October 2003.
[31] The bombings were partly used as pretext for launching the second Chechen conflict.

impunity," and for not condemning the violations from the highest political level. The CPT emphasized that the rights of persons in detention must always be respected.[32]

During 2003, the Russian State Duma passed legislation amending the Criminal Code, which finally included torture as a criminal offence under article 117. Torture was defined in the amendment as "infliction of physical and moral suffering aimed at coercing an individual into giving evidence or committing other acts against his will, as a punishment and for other purposes." Other articles in the code were also changed, such as article 302, to cover coercion into giving evidence. The new wording was: "Coercion of a suspect, defendant, victim, and witness into giving evidence, or coercion of an expert or specialist into giving an opinion or evidence under threat, blackmail or other illegal means on the side of the investigator or the person conducting the investigation, or equally another person with the knowledge or acquiescence of the investigator or the person conducting the investigation is punished by imprisonment for up to three years." Before these amendments were passed, Russian legislation had lacked a clear definition of torture. Even though officials could still have been prosecuted for resorting to torture, the new criminal definition of torture will undoubtedly give law enforcement agents a clear indication of the illegality of the act as well as its consequences.[33]

Although the new amendments to the Criminal Code strengthened the protection against torture, they still failed to fulfill Russia's international obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture and other international instruments. The article failed to mention the involvement of an official in the act of torture, which is paramount to the internationally established definition of torture.[34]

- On 26 February, officers of a police station in the city of Kazan illegally detained D. Petrov and A. Nuriev (both under the age of 18). The police officers kept them at the station for almost two days, during which they subjected them to sustained torture and beatings in an attempt to make them provide information about a car stereo theft.[35]

In a great number of cases, information gained by the police through torture was used against defendants in court regardless of whether the defendant testified that the information was extracted under duress.

- In early 2003, the Nizhnii Novgorod Regional Court found N. Zakharov guilty of murder based on his own confession and the testimony of three witnesses. In court, all three witnesses declared they had been tortured by investigative officials and forced to testify against Zakharov. The court relied on the testimony of the three witnesses to find Zakharov guilty, having decided that their declarations of having been tortured were false. The court failed to take into account that none of the witnesses had even been acquainted with Zakharov and consequently would be unlikely to be interested in relieving him of criminal liability.[36]

Prisons and Detention Facilities

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[32] European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, "Public statement concerning the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation," 10 July 2003, at www.cpt.coe.int.
[33] Moscow Helsinki Group, "Russian Legislation Now Features the Definition of Torture," 2004.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Moscow Helsinki Group, *Alternative NGO Report on Observance of ICCPR by the Russian Federation*, July 2003, at www.mhg.ru.
[36] Ibid.

The UN Human Rights Committee commented on the overcrowding of Russian prisons in its concluding observations for the observance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). It welcomed the initial reports of improvements in prison conditions but remained concerned about poor hygiene and violence by prison guards in some places of detention. It also welcomed the adoption, in September, of the draft federal law "On Public Control Over Ensuring Human Rights in Places of Forced Detention and Assistance of Public Associations in Their Activities."[37]

During the year, conditions in prisons and pre-trial detention centers remained harsh and led to the death of many inmates. Reports suggested that the number of prisoners and detainees held in these facilities who died was lower than previous years (10,000-11,000). The majority of deaths were attributed to poor sanitary conditions and lack of adequate medical care.[38]

Prisons were the main source of TB in Russia—more than half of all new cases of TB were diagnosed in prisoners and ex-prisoners. The annual turnover of the Russian penitentiary system was five million people, with an undetermined number of repeat offenders. The poor conditions in prisons were attributed to chronic under-funding, a lack of interest from the Ministry of Health (since prisons were funded by the Ministry of Justice), and inadequate training of prison personnel. Increasing numbers HIV-positive and TB-infected inmates and more and more patients who were infected with the strain of TB that is resistant to the most powerful first line drugs were of serious concern.[39]

In Russia, dealing with TB was considered a political, as opposed to a medical issue. In order to deal with the situation effectively and control the spread of the disease, the Russian government would have to dramatically reduce the prison population and improve living conditions in prisons.[40]

Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination and Freedom of Religion

Violent attacks, harassment by law enforcement agents and discrimination by local governments continued to persist against religious, ethnic and national minorities. Anti-Semitism was also commonly reported.

The most serious attacks were racist attacks committed by skinheads all over the country, which led to the death of several people, including a small child. After two female allegedly Chechen suicide bombers killed 16 people in a queue to an outdoor rock festival in Moscow in July and another allegedly Chechen woman killed six along with herself in an explosion in the center of Moscow, in December, women in Moscow of Caucasian appearance were targeted for constant document checks and intimidation by law enforcement officers. Ethnic minorities from the Caucasus and Central Asia, Muslims and Roma were frequently discriminated against on a large scale by government and society alike.[41]

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[37] UN Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee: Russian Federation. 06/11/2003. CCPR/CO/79/RUS*, 6 November 2003, at http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/622c5ddc8c476dc4c1256e0c003c9758?Opendocument.

[38] US State Department, op.cit.

[39] Moscow Helsinki Group, *Alternative NGO Report on the Observance of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*

[40] Ibid.

[41] Moscow Helsinki Group, *Incitement of hatred, cause for discrimination and violence on ethnic and religious grounds – 2003*, 2004, at www.mhg.ru.

- In September, in the outskirts of St. Petersburg, a Roma woman and her children were attacked by a gang of skinheads, which resulted in the tragic death of a six-year-old girl. Local police opened an investigation and detained some young skinheads, aged 17-18, for ten days. However, at the time of writing, no one had been charged with the assault and murder.[42]

Skinhead attacks were registered in several other cities, including Moscow and Nizhnii-Novgorod. In Nizhnii-Novgorod, a total of 20 skinhead attacks were recorded during the period of October to November 2003 alone. Skinheads were behind attacks based on ethnic or religious grounds most frequently, however, not all assaults were committed by skinheads.[43]

- On 25 April, in the Kholmskii settlement and in the village of Akhtyrskii in the Krasnodar Krai region, local youths organized a premeditated mass beating of Meskhetian Turks. Approximately 60 young men aged between 15 and 18, armed with chains and knuckle-dusters and driving cars without number plates attacked the local Meskhetian Turk community. The attack resulted in around 20 injured people, six seriously enough to require hospitalization.[44]

Racist attacks at market places where many Caucasians and Central Asians work were especially common. Attacks were reported in May in Ekaterinburg and in November in Irkutsk. In the Irkutsk region, a mosque was also burned down by arsonists.[45]

- On 2 May, large scale violent clashes took place between ethnic Ingush and Ossetians in the village of Tarskoe in North Ossetia. The Ingush, who are in the minority in this area, were attacked by at least 25 armed Ossetians following an exchange of verbal abuse. The Ingush residents maintained that the Ossetian group was carrying machine-guns and included representatives of the local police force dressed in police uniforms. The attack resulted in serious injuries with up to 20 civilians hospitalized. The Ingush victims stated that the incident was but one in a series of such assaults and cited cases of threats and extortion by law enforcement agents in the area. In response to an IHF letter of concern to the authorities, the regional Interior Ministry ignored the allegations but claimed, implausibly, that "both sides have agreed to live together in peace."[46]

- In November, there was a major fire at the People's Friendship University in Moscow, which is attended by many African students. Forty-two people died. Unconfirmed reports suggested that the fire was an arson attack with racist motivation. There were credible reports from surviving students that it took the fire brigade and ambulances up to an hour to arrive, which contrasted sharply with the authorities' report that the services were there within a couple of minutes. Disturbingly, students stated that ambulance personnel tried to extort money from the foreign students before taking them to the hospital and prioritized casualties not based on who needed most help but on ethnic grounds. Prior to the fire, students of the People's Friendship University were victims of racial attacks, bomb threats and suspected arson attacks. Shortly after the fire in November, six foreign

[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] US State Department, op.cit.
[46] IHF/Legal Protection of Individual Rights in Russia, letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 30 May 2003.

students sustained serious physical injury after being attacked by a gang of skinheads on the university campus.[47]

For most religious groups, other than the Russian Orthodox Church, the bureaucracy and corruption of middle and local government proved to be the main obstruction to the free practice of religion. In April, the mayor of Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk prohibited the construction of a Jehovah's Witness place of worship and took over the construction site, making it municipal property. The takeover was carried out in violation of a regional court decision on the matter.[48] At time of writing the status of the building was unclear.

Several attempts were made by the prosecutor's offices to close down religious organizations.

- In March, authorities closed down a Pentecostal seminary in Vladivostok on the grounds that it did not have a license for educational activities, despite the fact that no such license was required for religious education.[49]

Restitution of religious property confiscated by the Communist regime continued to cause controversy.

- In Orel, the Jewish community petitioned for several years for the restitution of a synagogue back to the community. Restitution was finally approved in 2003 by the city of Orel. Officials of the Krasnodar region, however, refused to respect the decision to return the synagogue citing problems finding alternative housing for the current occupants of the building—a youth radio school. The Jewish community, nevertheless, was offered to buy back the synagogue from the head of the city Duma, Aleksandr Kiriushin.[50]

Asylum Seekers and Immigrants

The new citizenship laws that came into force on 31 December 2003 will directly affect thousand of citizens of the former Soviet Union who will become stateless when the validity of their Soviet passports expires. Those who are denied citizenship/permanent residence in Russia will effectively be barred of many other rights, such as free movement, access to health care, housing, education and pensions and will not be able to register marriages, deaths or births.

The length of Moscow Immigration Services pre-registration procedure came to a new all-time high during 2003, leaving asylum seekers waiting for up to four years before they were even entitled to register their application. Concern regarding this issue was expressed by the UN Human Rights Committee when it discussed the Russian Federation's observance of the ICCPR in October.[51]

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[47] Amnesty International, "Russian Federation: Foreign students at People's Friendship University victims of discrimination," press releases, 22 December 2003, AI Index EUR 46/096/2003, at www.amnesty.org .
[48] Moscow Helsinki Group, *Alternative NGO Report on Observance of ICCPR by the Russian Federation* July 2004.
[49] Ibid.
[50] US State Department, *International Religious Freedom Report 2003* – Russian Federation, 2004, at www.state.gov.
[51] UN Human Rights Committee, op.cit.

While the number of immigrants to Russia continued to rise, Russians citizens themselves constituted the biggest group of asylum seekers in Western Europe.[52]

Economic and Social Rights

President Putin stated during his annual address to the Federal Assembly in May 2003 that the problem of poverty was the most acute problem facing the country and needed the adoption of urgent measures.

Living standards have improved for some Russians. Reports from August stated that during 2002, another four million Russian citizens raised their living standards to above the poverty line. The situation was, nonetheless, very bleak in 2003 with a quarter of all Russians still living below the poverty line. The poverty line was established as a monthly income of 2,238 rubles (€64).[53]

Russia has the fastest growing rate of people being infected with HIV in the world. As of 29 September, 252,777 HIV cases had been diagnosed in Russia. However, of these, only 817 people had been diagnosed with AIDS, which indicated that the HIV/AIDS epidemic was still "young," in comparison with the rest of Europe. Of all HIV cases, 64.5% were young people aged between 17 and 25. Most Russians with HIV were men (75%), but the proportion of women was growing. While most cases were transmitted through intravenous drug use, there was a strong and growing trend of heterosexual transmission. In 2001 heterosexual transmission was responsible for 4.6% new HIV cases; in 2002, 11.9% of all new cases, mostly young women, contracted HIV through heterosexual contact.

Experts spoke about the "changing face" of the HIV epidemic in Russia. Around 15% of HIV positive persons were in detention, making up 4% of the prison population. Prospective employers and educational institutions continued to demand HIV tests although it was contrary to federal law. Lack of knowledge about the virus caused discrimination against people with HIV in that they were sometimes denied health care. Discrimination sometimes extended to family members. For example, HIV negative children of HIV infected parents were denied places at day care centers.[54]

Trafficking in Human Beings

In December, the new amendments to the Criminal Code criminalized human trafficking and the use of forced labor. The amendments also extended criminal liability for recruiting people into prostitution, organized prostitution and the distribution of child pornography. Punishment under the amendments were as follow: trafficking and the use of slave labor with aggravating circumstances was punishable by up to 15 years in prison; recruitment for prostitution, 8 years; organizing prostitution, 10 years; and distributing child pornography, 8 years.[55]

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[52] UNHCR News Stories, "Russian asylum seekers increase while Iraqis decrease, reports UNHCR," 2 December 2003, at www.unhcr.ch.
[53] Moscow Helsinki Group, *Alternative NGO Report on the Observance of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*
[54] Ibid.
[55] US State Department, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2003 – Russian Federation.*

The draft law "On the Status of Trafficking Victims" was pending before the Duma at the time of writing. Under the law in force in 2003, there were no provisions to protect the victims of human trafficking. The law, if passed, would be a welcome additional protection for the victims of trafficking. Indeed, the UN Human Rights Committee, in its concluding observations on the observance of the Russian Federation under the ICCPR, expressed concern at the large numbers of persons being trafficked for sexual and labor exploitation.[56]

Human Rights Defenders

While most local human rights groups and NGOs were allowed to operate in peace, three major organizations were harassed by the authorities in 2003.

- In November, tax police conducted an audit of Otkrytaia Rossia, a foundation founded by the former CEO of Yukos, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, which supports various civic initiatives.

- In the same month, the Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute came under attack. Masked men wearing camouflage clothes raided the organization's office and seized computers and documents. Officially, the raid was linked to a private business disagreement, however, suspicions remained that government pressure was the actual motive.[57]

- One case that covers several areas of human rights violations was that involving the Russian Orthodox Church and the Sakharov Centre in Moscow. In the beginning of the year the centre put on an exhibition called "Caution – Religion," portraying the Orthodox Church negatively. The exhibition depicted an Orthodox church in the shape of a vodka bottle, hinting at the favorable conditions the church enjoyed trading in alcohol and cigarettes during the 1990s. The show was attacked and defaced by six young men who were reportedly members of a special religious group within the Russian Orthodox Church. Even though the assailants were caught by the police and initially two of the men were charged, they were later released by the court which stated that the vandals "had the right to express their disgust at the exhibit." Two senior officials and three of the exhibition's artists were investigated for criminal offences. On 25 December the center's director was charged with inciting religious and ethnic hatred.[58] At time of writing, the case had not yet concluded.

- On 15 March, Imran Ezhiev, the head of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society's Information Centre in the Northern Caucasus and the local MHG representative, was kidnapped in Chechnya by unidentified individuals wearing masks. After appeals from several international organizations, Ezhiev was released after three days. Ezhiev was likely targeted due to his political activities in the region. Ezhiev said that he was still in fear for his life and complained that he was under constant surveillance by what he

[56] UN Human Rights Committee, op.cit.
[57] *Moscow Times*, "Soros Institute: Politics behind Raid?" 12 November 2003.
[58] US State Department, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2003 – Russian Federation*, 25 February 2004, at www.state.gov.

believes are Russian security forces or forces loyal to the Chechen President Akhmed Kadyrov.[59]

Chechnya

Chechnya remained one of the IHF priority regions in 2003. The IHF carried out fact-finding missions to Chechnya and the surrounding areas and issued several statements to draw international attention to the ongoing grave violations of human rights in that region. The IHF also organized several seminars in Ingushetia and Dagestan to help Chechen NGOs in providing legal support for the victims of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. One central topic was how to bring cases to the ECtHR or the UN Committee for Human Rights.

In particular, the IHF urged international organizations and governments to use their influence to solve the conflict in Chechnya. It appealed to the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly[60] and to its Committee of Ministers to address the problem of Chechnya.[61] In addition, the IHF took up the continuing abuses in Chechnya at the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in October and issued statements on the elections and the referendum held in Chechnya during 2003.[62]

In December, the IHF and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee organized a civil society conference parallel to the EU Ministerial Meeting in Maastricht to emphasize human rights issues in the region, especially the problem of impunity in Chechnya.[63] Moreover, it urged EU member states to insist that the Russian Federation comply with international human rights and humanitarian law standards in Chechnya in the context of the November EU-Russia Summit in Rome.[64]

Elections[65]

In 2003, three elections were held in the war-torn region of Chechnya: a referendum on a new Chechen constitution, Chechen presidential elections and elections for the Chechen

[59] World Organisation Against Torture, urgent action, "The Russian Federation: Fear for the Safety of Mr. Imran Ezhiev", 28 January 2004, at www.omct.org.
[60] IHF, Open Letter by the IHF and the MHG to President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 1 October, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5190.
[61] IHF, "Appeal to the Council Of Europe's Committee of Ministers: Address the Problem of Chechnya," 27 October 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5211.
[62] See IHF, "No Human Rights Improvements in Post-Referendum Chechnya,"18 July 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=4811; *Still in a State of Terror - Chechnya after the Referendum*, September 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/documents/doc_summary.php?sec_id=3&d_id=3689; "Chechnya: Minimum Security Conditions Do Not Exist For Free and Fair Elections," 10 September 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5161; "On the Council of Europe's Decision not to Observe the 5 October 2003 Presidential Elections in Chechnya," 1 October 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5191.
[63] IHF, "Chechnya: Impunity, Disappearances, Torture, and the Denial of Political Rights. Can the OSCE be Effective in Addressing the Worst Human Rights Problem in the Region?" at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5231.
[64] IHF, "Will the EU Pressure President Putin on Chechnya?" 21 October 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=5208.
[65] Unless otherwise noted, based on Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), "*Chechnya 2003. Political Process through the Looking Glass*," 2004. See also MHG, *Presidential Elections in Chechnya*, Monitoring Reports, posted at http://www.ihf-hr.org.

Parliament. Violence increased in connection with all of the elections, while, at the same time lead-up to both the referendum on the Chechen Constitution and the Chechen presidential elections showed the lowest number of "disappearances," indicating that the authorities do have control over such practices if there is a will and an interest to do so. The highest number of violent incidents occurred in connection with the presidential election.

As a result of the tragic hostage crisis of October 2002, the Russian authorities have discarded all remaining hopes of a political solution through dialogue with the elected representatives of the Chechen Republic. Instead, they created a political process of their own. Thus, the 23 March referendum looked like a way for the Russian authorities to give the impression that a political process was in place and the overall situation was getting back to normal. Official records claimed that the voter turnout during the referendum was 96%, with 95.4% of them voting for the new Constitution. However, independent observers challenged those figures and reported very low participation. The IHF, the MHG, the Human Rights Center "Memorial" and other human rights organizations argued that neither security procedures nor open adequate public debate were sufficient to allow for a free and fair referendum, and questioned the legitimacy of the process by which the Constitution was drafted and the referendum was called.

All criticism was ignored by the authorities, and a presidential election was held on 5 October. The acting president of Chechnya and Moscow-supported candidate, Akhmed Kadyrov was elected as the new president of the Chechen Republic. The election was marred by reports of threats and intimidation against the civilian population in order to pressurize them into voting for Kadyrov. During the campaign there were credible reports of masked men dressed in camouflage fatigues who broke into houses and physically abused them and threatened with reprisals unless they voted for Akhmed Kadyrov. Kadyrov himself denied these allegations and accused his opponent of trying to defame him. However, security forces under Kadyrov's command later became notorious for arbitrary, violent attacks like these.

- On 1 September, in the hours of early morning, armed people in military uniforms stormed into the house of the Migiev family in the village of Orekhovo and took away the only son of the family, Imran Migiev. Imran's body was found the next morning, just 50 meters from the house. He had been stabbed to death with a hilted bayonet.

- On 2 September, Saipuddin Tsitsaev, the head of village administration in Chechen-Aul near the capital Grozny, was killed. At dawn, unknown armed and masked persons stormed into his house, dragged him into the yard, shot him and killed him.

- On 15 September, another cold-blooded execution was committed by unknown armed people in masks and military uniforms. Around 2 a.m., there was a knock on the door of Isa Musaev's house in the Shali district. His wife thought it was an ID check by the military and opened the door without asking who it was. Four armed men in masks came in. They went straight to the room where Isa Musaev was sleeping, forced him out of bed and put him up against a wall. They did not ask any questions—they shot Musaev to death and hurriedly left the house. According to the wife of the victim, two of the assailants were Chechen and the other two were Russian.

During the presidential election campaign, credible reports were recorded of Chechen refugees in the refugee camps in Ingushetia being pressured to participate in the elections by representatives of the state. The camp administrators threatened to delete the names of those who

refused to participate from the list of people receiving humanitarian aid and declare them ineligible for compensation for destroyed property.

There were also widespread rumors of bribes paid to the voters by Kadyrov. For example, in the weeks leading up to the presidential election, Chechen residents in Achkhoi-Martan were given tea and sugar with the explanation that they were gifts from Kadyrov. Other reports claimed that parents of baby boys who were born on the 5 October would be paid 10,000 rubles; couples who wed on the same day would be given presents.

Some of the presidential candidates, as well as members of their families and staff, were threatened and there were reports that they were even shot at. Candidates, apart from Kadyrov, faced difficulties managing their campaigns. Some candidates had their registration withdrawn or were denied free TV time. One after another, the most important presidential candidates either had their candidacy cancelled, or they dropped out of the election. For example, prominent candidate Malik Saidullaev, a wealthy Moscow businessman, had his presidential candidacy declared void by the Central Election Commission for failing to register properly, a decision that was maintained by the Supreme Court of the Chechen Republic and by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

Days before the election there were many reported attempts, some successful, to plant bombs in polling stations despite the fact that they were under 24-hour guard. On election day, there were reports of polling stations being fired at by unknown assailants. Many inhabitants of Grozny left the city for the countryside to stay with relatives or left for the neighboring republic of Ingushetia. Many expressed the feeling that votes would be "counted" regardless of whether people voted. Representatives of the MHG were present in Grozny and other parts of the republic to monitor the situation at polling stations.

The MHG representatives stated that roads and public places everywhere were deserted. In the polling stations there were only a couple of voters at the time of the visits despite the fact that the ballot register showed that a large percentage of the voters had already voted. The observations were the same from several different parts of the republic: very few people were voting, yet the polling registers showed a high turnout of voters throughout the day. In some districts the turnout was allegedly 100% and all votes were cast in favor of Kadyrov.

There were no international election monitors in Chechnya for the presidential elections. The OSCE and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe turned down the invitation to send their observers to monitor the elections. The MHG also declined to officially send any human rights activist to observe the elections. The main issue was that the three real challengers for the post of president had been forced to leave the campaign. The general feeling among activists was that sending election monitors would attribute a false legal status to the election. However, observers from CIS-states and the Russian Duma were present at the election.

According to official figures, Kadyrov received 82.5% of the vote. The next candidate, Abdulla Bugaev, received 5.6%. The official turnout was 83.3%. Similar to the March referendum, the high turnout appeared implausible. The voting population of Chechnya was probably not the figure the official Election Commission stated 545,000, a figure that included 30,000 servicemen based in Chechnya. The figure was fairly unlikely to be that high considering the past decade of war and emigration. Indeed, there were reports of people who had died five years previously to be on the voter lists in one of the polling stations.

Forced Returns of IDPs from Ingushetia to Chechnya

During 2003, Russian authorities continued their efforts to force Chechen internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in neighboring republics, mainly Ingushetia, to return home despite the volatile situation in the area. Civilians continued to be killed, tortured and "disappeared" on a daily basis. Encouraging IDPs to return, through using threats and different incentives, appeared to be part of an official strategy to convince outside observers that the situation was returning to normal.[66] In 2002 these "normalization" efforts were intensified and at the end of 2002 the first IDP camp in Ingushetia was closed. Since then, authorities have worked towards closing all temporary settlements in Ingushetia, denying that they were forcibly returning IDPs to their homes. The local authorities closed further two camps: "Bella" in September and "Alina" in December. A further three were threatened to be closed by the authorities as soon as possible. The official position was that all camps should be closed by 1 March 2004.[67]

At the end of 2003, there were an estimated 67,000 displaced Chechens still in Ingushetia compared to over 200,000 at the peak of the fighting in early 2000. Approximately 7,000 of the 67,000 IDPs lived in tent camps. In 2003, a considerable number of IDPs returned to Chechnya, partly because of pressure from the local authorities, and partly because they wished to return home. Financial compensation for lost housing and property was promised to those IDPs who returned to Chechnya, however, the authorities defaulted on payments. Other methods used to pressure IDPs included: threats to cancel their migration service registration without which they would be unable to receive state aid; threats of arrests; visits from the FSB; increased security sweeps *(zachistki)* in Ingushetia; and cutting off water, gas and electricity supplies to the camps. The authorities also threatened to exclude IDPs from humanitarian aid and falsely reported on the security situation in Chechnya.[68]

"Disappearances," Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions, Torture

In 2003, with the armed conflict being in its fourth year, there were still numerous forced "disappearances" and many cases of extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions. Torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment seemed to be regularly used against detainees. In contrast to the years 2000 and 2001, now an increasing number official and semi-official forces under the authority of Akhmad Kadyrov were alleged to be the perpetrators.

Statistics of the Human Rights Center "Memorial" showed that some 477 people were kidnapped in 2003 (of whom 155 were later released, 49 were found murdered and 273 went missing). However, these findings represent the result of a monitoring covering only 25-30 % of the Chechen territory. As noted above (see Elections), the lowest numbers of "disappearances" were reported prior to the referendum on the Chechen Constitution and the presidential election.

On 20 February 2004, the Chechen Deputy Prime Minister Movsar Khamidov cited the official statistics on 2003: according to them, 581 people were abducted. Also the commander of the Russian Joint Group of Forces in the North Caucasus stated that violent crimes such as banditry, kidnapping, and physical elimination threats continued to be on the rise in Chechnya.

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[66] See also IHF, "Disappearances Spread to Ingushetia: Torture, Ill-Treatment and Looting During Mop-up Operations in IDP Camps - Continued Impunity Demonstrates Need for ad hoc Tribunal," 18 June 2003, at http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewhtml.php?doc_id=3912.

[67] IHF, "The Coerced Return of Chechen IDPs from Ingushetia," March 2004, at www.ihf-hr.org.

[68] Ibid.

The Society for Russian-Chechen Friendship obtained several case files from the Kadyrov administration's Interior Ministry in which the so called "presidential security service" was said to have returned kidnapping victims to their families—who then ostensibly refused to file criminal complaints. The files explicitly used the word "ransom."

The number of security sweeps decreased, but they were still conducted as cruelly as ever, with robbery and extortion. A relatively new feature was that many women were kidnapped by the federal forces.

Lack of Accountability

Russia continued to resist establishing any meaningful accountability process to investigate all crimes allegedly committed by its forces. In the majority of cases opened by the Prosecutor's Office, failure to conduct even the most basic investigative steps, including questioning eyewitnesses and relatives, was the rule. As a result, most cases were either closed without having been thoroughly conducted or remained pending for prolonged periods. Only a very small number reached the courts.

The Russian Federation also failed to set up a national broad-based and independent commission of inquiry to investigate promptly alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in Chechnya. The UN Human Rights Commission in 2001 called for the establishment of such a commission. Russia created various offices on human rights in Chechnya, none of which qualifies as a commission of inquiry, while impunity prevailed in Chechnya.

The Case of Colonel Yuri Budanov

The criminal case against Colonel Yuri Budanov finally led to a conviction. The colonel was charged with murdering an 18-year-old Chechen girl, Kheda Kungaeva, in 2000 and was acquitted at the beginning of 2003 on the grounds of being "temporarily insane" following numerous psychiatric examinations. The prosecutors asked the court to drop the murder charges. The prosecution was then changed and the new prosecutors managed, together with the family's lawyers, to appeal the decision and in July finally get a conviction. Budanov was the highest ranking officer who has ever been tried for crimes committed against the civilian population during the Chechen conflict. However, the court ignored convincing evidence that Kungaeva had been raped and sentenced Budanov to a comparatively lenient term of 10 years.[69]

The Case of Ahmed Zakayev

Ahmed Zakayev, former Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov's special envoy abroad, was detained in the UK in the end of 2002 as Russia had put out a global warrant for his arrest. A request by the Russian authorities to extradite Ahmed Zakayev was denied by an English court in November 2003, arguing that the request was politically motivated. The British judge stated that since Russian authorities "are prepared to resort to torturing witnesses, there is a substantial risk that Mr. Zakayev would himself be subject to torture."[70]

European Court of Human Rights

[69] *Moscow Times, "Budanov Jailed for 10 years in Retrial,"* 28 July 2003.
[70] Prima News Agency, 17 November 2003, cited in BBC online News, 13 November 2003.

Several cases, which originated from the Chechen conflict, were declared admissible by the ECtHR. At the beginning of the year, six cases regarding torture, extra-judicial executions and indiscriminate bombing of Chechen civilians by federal forces during 1999 and 2000 were declared admissible. The ECtHR stated that admissibility criteria of exhaustion of domestic remedies were "closely linked to the merits of the complaints and should therefore be considered together with the merits."[71] In September, the ECtHR declared the case of *Shamaev and 12 others v. Georgia and Russia* admissible. The case concerns the extradition or forthcoming extradition of 13 persons of Chechen origin, held in detention in Russia and Georgia as of early 2004.[72]

Harassment of applicants to the ECtHR has become a serious problem in recent years. One applicant "disappeared" in June 2002, and the Russian forces allegedly extra-judicially executed another applicant and her family in May 2003. In addition, non-governmental groups that represent Chechen victims of human rights abuses before the ECtHR have documented threats against other applicants or their families in at least seven other cases.

[71] ECtHR, "Six complaints against Russia concerning events in Chechnya declared admissible," press release, 16 January 2003.
[72] ECtHR, "Admissibility decision in the case of Shamayev and 12 others v. Georgia and Russia," press release, 19 September 2003.