

URGENT ACTION

CHECHEN MAN FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED

Khusein Betelgeriev, a well-known songwriter and performer from Chechnya, Russian Federation, was taken away by two uniformed men from his home in Grozny on 31 March. He has been missing since and his life may be at risk.

In the evening of 31 March, two men in unidentifiable black uniforms, believed to be Chechen law enforcement officials, arrived in a black VAZ-2109 car at **Khusein Betelgeriev's** house in Grozny, the capital of the Chechen Republic, in the Russian Federation. They ordered Khusein Betelgeriev to go with them and refused to tell his wife where they were taking him. When the wife tried calling Khusein Betelgeriev on his mobile phone 15 minutes later, nobody answered. He has not been heard from since.

On 2 April, Khusein Betelgeriev's wife reported him as missing to the police. His disappearance has been widely reported in the media. On 4 April the Investigation Committee for the Chechen Republic (an agency responsible for criminal investigations) stated on its website that it was looking into reports of his abduction.

Two other Chechen men, Rizvan Ibraghimov and Abubakar Didiev, went missing on 1 April in similar circumstances, and both "reappeared" on 5 April. It transpired that they had been held at a local police station and released after attending a meeting with the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Ramzan Kadyrov wrote about this meeting on his Instagram account on the same day stating that Rizvan Ibraghimov and Abubakar Didiev had "offered apologies to the academic community and religious leadership of Chechnya" for some of their publications. Khusein Betelgeriev is still missing.

Please write immediately in Russian, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately establish the fate and whereabouts of Khusein Betelgeriev and ensure his safety and physical and mental integrity;
- Insisting that the circumstances of his disappearance are promptly, impartially and effectively investigated and, should any law enforcement officials be found to be suspected of responsibility for his enforced disappearance, bring them to justice in fair trial proceedings;
- Urging the authorities to ensure immediate and full respect for all fundamental human rights in Chechnya, including the right to liberty and the right to freedom of expression, as well as the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 MAY 2016 TO:

Chairman of the Investigation Committee

Aleksandr Ivanovich Bastrykin
Investigation Committee of the Russian
Federation
Tekhnicheskii pereulok, dom 2
105005 Moscow
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 495 966 97 76

**Salutation: Dear Chairman of the
Investigation Committee**

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

Yuriy Yakovlevich Chaika
Prosecutor General's Office
ul. B. Dmitrovka, d.15a
125993 Moscow GSP- 3
Russian Federation
Fax: +7495 987 58 41/ +7495 692 17 25

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Acting Head of the Investigation
Committee for the Chechen Republic
Sergei Vasilevich Sokolov
Ul. Altaiskaya d.3
Grozny, 36400 Chechen Republic
Russian Federation
Fax: +7 871 262 4122
Email: ip-chechen@sledcom.ru

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. EXCELLENCY MR ALEXANDER V. YAKOVENKO, Embassy of the Russian Federation (Residence of the Ambassador), 13 Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QX tel: 020 7229 3620 email: info@rusemb.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Khusein Betelgeriev is a well-known Chechen song writer and performer. He was also a senior member of staff at the Chechen State University, responsible for foreign language teaching, until he was dismissed in 2015. It is unclear what could be the reason for his suspected enforced disappearance.

There have been several incidents in Chechnya in recent months when individuals went missing for some time after publicly criticising the Chechen authorities. Some would re-appear after offering public apologies to the Kremlin-appointed leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, for their “mistakes”. Other victims of suspected enforced disappearances in Chechnya are still missing. In at least one recent case, the missing individual has been found dead. Khizir Ezhiev, an academic from Grozny State Technical University, was detained on 22 December 2015 by law enforcement officials at a petrol station. His dead body was discovered in a forest on 1 January 2016. In previous years too, there were numerous cases of enforced disappearances in Chechnya, none of which has ever been effectively investigated.

Rizvan Ibragimov and Abubakar Didiev have gained publicity in Chechnya for their publications offering unconventional interpretation of the history of the Chechen people and of Islam. At the end of March 2016 they were summoned to a meeting with Chechen religious leaders at which they were criticised for their publications. Both were taken from their homes by Chechen law enforcement officials on 1 April and nothing was known of their fate until 5 April. On that day, they attended a meeting held by Ramzan Kadyrov with Chechen academics and opinion leaders. A video of this event shows them standing and apologizing to the meeting participants for their “mistakes”. Following this both were able to return to their families. Rizvan Ibragimov later wrote on the social media that he had spent the days he was missing at the Lenin District Police Station in Grozny and stressed that he had not been abducted or ill-treated. However, it was clear from his message that he was not allowed to leave until after he attended the meeting with Ramzan Kadyrov. There has been no official response to the report of the arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention of Rizvan Ibragimov and Abubakar Didiev.

Name: Khusein Betelgeriev

Gender m/f: male

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