

Bulletin of the Memorial Human Rights Center
Situation in the North Caucasus conflict zone:
analysis from the human rights perspective
Spring 2009

The Memorial Human Rights Center continues its work in the North Caucasus. We offer you here a new issue of our regular bulletin containing a brief description of the key events featured in our news section over the three winter months of 2008 and a few examples of our analysis of the development of the situation in the region. This bulletin contains materials collected by the Memorial Human Rights Center staff working in the North Caucasus and published on the Memorial website as well as media and news agencies reports.

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North Caucasus, June 2009: a targeted blow

This bulletin focusing on the events of spring 2009 was published in summer 2009 and we, therefore, feel obliged to include some of the key events of June.

On **June 5** Dagestan Minister of Interior **Adilgerey Magomedtagirov** was assassinated in *Makhachkala*.

On **June 22** a suicide bomber attacked the motorcade carrying President of Ingushetia **Yunus-Bek Yevkurov**.

What is paramount about these attacks is not even the fact that they occurred, nor the personalities of the targets in these attacks, but the fact that these persons themselves are symbols of different approaches to the solutions to the grave problems of today's North Caucasus, while subsequent events have repeatedly demonstrated how these solutions may, in fact, create further complications.

Adilgerey Magomedtagirov, who was assassinated on June 5, had been holding the position of the Republican Minister of Interior since **1998**, and during all this time he was perceived as one of the main driving forces in the fierce struggle with against the armed underground and those who follow a different branch of Islam than the traditional one for the region, determining the style and the methods for this struggle (see the “Dagestan: the Gubden Knot” section of this bulletin).

However, in the aftermath of the assassination two leads were equally seriously considered by the investigators. According to one, the assassination was orchestrated by the fundamentalist Islamist underground. The second opinion linked the assassination to the struggle between various clans for power in the republic.

The very course and nature of these debates puts forward the question which is paramount for today’s situation: what is the greatest threat to the peace and stability in the republic?

Yes, in the recent years the armed underground has declared a true manhunt against senior officers of the republic’s law enforcement and military agencies.

On the other hand, during the last 12-15 years a lot of blood has been shed due to the struggle for power between the criminal groups divided on the basis of ethnicity, who were jostling for power and influence in the republic: bloody settling of scores, contract killings, attempts on the lives of political figures and civil servants. The circumstances of the attack and the type of weapon used by the hired killers - a Vintorez sniper’s rifle used by the elite special task detachments, which has never before featured in criminal wars - largely support the second version of events. This type of arms was never used by the guerilla militants (the discussion of various circumstances and investigative leads can be found in the following article <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2009/060/17.html>).

The Memorial Human Rights Centre sincerely hopes that this crime will be solved, whereas those responsible for it will be punished according to law (<http://www.memo.ru/2009/06/08/0806091.htm>). The future will show, which of these leads is closest to the truth – however, the amazing fact is that the public and the media discuss both possibilities as equally likely ones. Who killed the Minister of Interior? The uncompromising enemies of the Russian state? Or those who are themselves part of the republican authorities and are hoping to seize the power tomorrow. The presentation of the question itself indicates the unacceptability of the current situation in Dagestan.

Our long experience of work in the region confirms this opinion.

There is little doubt of that the armed Islamist underground presents a serious threat to the situation in the region and the state is called to fight against it.

However, we believe that a still greater threat to the security in Dagestan are the widespread clan mentality and the power struggle between clans and criminal groups. They represent, however, not some kind of chaotic criminal groups, criminal clans penetrate all levels of authority, law enforcement and security agencies. The status of an individual in the society is largely determined by his or her connections with those in power. This system gives rise to the scale of corruption which can be regarded as unprecedented even for the North Caucasus. It deprives the republic’s citizens of all hope for a dignified life, also sowing discord and tension among the ethnic groups populating it. Another inevitable consequence of such situation are political assassinations.

This system is itself generating followers of the armed underground that it is fighting against. A considerable number of people who cannot accept the current situation are searching for a way out of it and, sadly, not infrequently see creation of an Islamic state as a suitable solution. Many eventually choose to join the armed extremist groups. In order for the Russian state to tackle this threat, first, another, much more grave threat to peace and stabilisation – the system of criminal clans which have taken roots in the governmental and security structures – needs to be dealt with.

Attempts on lives of representatives of the authorities have so far taken place not in Dagestan alone, - on **June 10, 2009 Aza Gazgireyeva**, deputy chair of Ingushetia's Supreme Court, was gunned down in Nazran. Unidentified gunmen opened fire at the official Gazelle carrying Gazgireyeva. She was killed instantly, four other persons were wounded, among them was one minor (<http://www.memo.ru/2009/06/10/1006093.htm>).

This assassination again reminded that Ingushetia was probably the "hottest spot" in this confrontation between the authorities and the armed extremist underground in the north Caucasus region. This confrontation is characterised by the extreme degree of mutually-directed cruelty. The underground forces use terrorist methods in their struggle trying to bring pressure not only on the governmental structures, but on the society as a whole. Civilians are increasingly becoming victims of their attacks. In 2007-2008 dozens of murders of members of ethnic minorities were committed after the guerilla leaders declared them to be an acceptable target. The death toll included schoolteachers and a female doctor. The past year saw an increase in the number of attacks targeting not only officers of law enforcement structures, but also random members of public.

On many occasions there were children among the victims of the attacks: they were either wounded themselves or witnessed their parents being killed. The same thing happened in Nazran that time.

Magomedtagirov's assassination provoked a sharp reaction on the part of the federal centre. On **June 9** a session of the Russian Security Council was held in Makhachkala. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev spoke about various aspects, including the dangers of clan mentality. One of the most famous remarks of the Presidents were his words about "*extremism which is imported into our country from abroad, all possible kinds of bastards who penetrate onto our territory to do their dirty work here*" (http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2009/06/09/1847_type63374type63378type82634_217520.shtml).

Among other suggestions, the heads of the republics were recommended to put a firm and decisive end to the activities of NGOs which may be aiding the extremists – this was the message of Ingushetia's President Yunus-Bek Yevkurov at the meeting with the prominent members of Ingushetia's public on **June 10**. Yevkurov claimed that he was also aware of that certain non-governmental organizations were, on the contrary, working towards stabilisation of the situation and that he maintains close contacts and cooperation with such NGOs as *Mashr* and the Memorial.

Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was left a heavy legacy by his predecessor Murat Zyazikov. The armed underground has declared a true war against the republican authorities. Officers of the military and law enforcement service systematically violated the law and the basic human rights in the course of the "counter-terrorism" operations doing little to distinguish between their adversaries and civilians. This put up a wall between the authorities, who refused to start a dialogue with the spontaneous massive opposition, and member of the public. The corruption has reached unprecedented levels, which situation is fairly logical considering the line of ex-President Zyazikov who had opened the republic for counter-terrorism operations of the security and law enforcement agencies.

Veteran military officer Yevkurov, who replaced "closet intelligence officer" Zyazikov, had experience of practical command over large quantities of people and of being responsible for them. But 8 months are decidedly a term not sufficient in order to clear up the immense backlog of problems that had been accumulating over 8 years. It nevertheless became quite clear that Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was resolved to change radically the existing style of governance in the republic.

The republican authorities have endeavoured their best efforts to change the pattern and the methods of their work in the continuing struggle with the armed underground, to exclude violations of the law in the course of the counter-terrorism operations, to organise public control over such, drawing a decisive line between the parties to the conflict and the civilians. Yevkurov made a few

important steps towards reducing this gap between the people and the authorities, many prominent opposition members were appointed to hold positions in governmental structures. The President is very consistent in his efforts to help the society believe that the authorities are indeed seeking to protect it. The people of Ingushetia who found themselves between two equally threatening sources of violence, one represented by the authorities, and the other – by the guerilla underground, now finally were given the hope of breaking out of that deadlock. Moreover, the President finally began to combat the rampant corruption.

This governance model is different from those that were employed in Chechnya, where the instrument chosen for suppression of the armed underground was imposition of a total control over the society, or in Dagestan, where the internal struggle between the corrupt clans of those in power expanded its scale under the pretext of counter-terrorist struggle. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov and his policies go against the grain with many. His attempt to gain support of the population deprive the armed underground of its mobilization base. He is equally inconvenient in the eyes of the corrupt authorities and officers of the security services.

In the previous, winter bulletin, summarizing the results of the first 100 days of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov's work in the capacity of the president of Ingushetia, we concluded that all plans and hopes for speedy restoration of the rule of law in the republic had failed: terrorist attacks and armed clashes with militant groups continued, some of them claiming a significant number of lives, as did the terror on the part of the law enforcement agencies: brutal methods of conducting special operations, extrajudicial executions, abductions.

Spring 2009 brought along contradictory tendencies: on the one hand, the efforts of the new republican authorities aimed at normalisation of the situation and combating such long-standing social diseases as embezzlement, corruption, arbitrariness of law enforcement agencies, are obvious (see the 'Ingushetia: positive changes and tendencies' section of this bulletin). The amount of work awaiting attention made the President of Ingushetia often burn midnight oil and work on weekends, as he himself describes it (*RIA Novosti*, 18.4.2009). In pursuing his line Yevkurov enjoyed the support of President **Dmitry Medvedev**, who allocated 29 billion rubles for the republic's development last winter (however, this money has not yet begun to arrive). On the other hand, it was obvious that the new President was not successful in suppressing the terrorist underground active on the territory of the republic (see the "In the meantime in Ingushetia" section of this bulletin). Abductions and murders of civilians by officers of the republican law enforcement agencies also continued to take place, though at a more moderate scale (see the 'Ingushetia: special task operations follow the same old scenario' and the "Ingushetia: civilian abductions continue to be popular practice" sections of this bulletin).

On the morning of **June 22, 2009**, while Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was returning from his ancestral village of *Tarskoye* (in the Prigorodny district of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania) having just entered the territory of Ingushetia, a suicide bomber driving a car packed with explosives detonated it as Yevkurov's motorcade was passing by (<http://www.memo.ru/2009/06/22/2206093.html>). Yevkurov was badly wounded. His bodyguard **Mustafa Kotiev** was killed, chief of the presidential security **Uvais Yevkurov** was wounded. The driver, **Ramzan Yevkurov**, received wounds so grave that the doctors decided against sending him to Moscow in a special *Scalpel* medical airplane – he died at the Nazran hospital on **the night of June 27**.

President of Ingushetia Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was delivered to the Vishnevsky Medical Institute on the same day of June 22 and remained unconscious till the end of June.

We hope that Yunus-Bek Yevkurov will soon recover and be able to continue his work.

The first hours after the attempt on Yevkurov's life demonstrated, on the one hand, the helplessness of the law enforcement agencies, and, on the other, their anxiety to immediately report their success in performing their duties.

The chaos that there was in everything – including the names and the number of victims - did not deter them from almost immediately starting to voice a wide range of leads.

Practically nobody had any doubts as to that the terrorist attack was orchestrated by the extremist underground.

It was practically immediately announced that the suicide bomber was a woman – **Patimat Mutalieva** – a sister of a killed member of a militant group. This had ostensibly been established by a genetic expertise – the security agencies claimed to have a sufficient data bank at their disposal. It was only the focus of public attention on the event that helped to clarify promptly that Mutalieva, who had been detained in late March during a special operation and later released upon a personal order from President Yevkurov (he met and spoke to her in person – see the “Ingushetia: special operations follow the same scenario” section), was by no means a suicide bomber, had no links with the armed underground, was still alive and at home – she was immediately interrogated and released. Later the surveillance cameras helped to establish that the suicide bomber in question was in fact a man. A week after the attack, when the remains of the terrorist were finally delivered to the Rostov laboratory, the genetic expertise confirm this, failing however to establish his identity.

The investigation continues and we hope for its success. The propensity of the authorities of all levels to opt for swift, dramatic and spectacular action is obvious. Meanwhile, only systemised and methodic work – like the line pursued by President Yevkurov in Ingushetia – can be relied upon to produce any tangible result.

Comments on websites, blogs and in chat-rooms show the respect that Yevkurov's efforts have won not only among Ingushetia's people but also in the other regions of the Caucasus: Internet users on Ingush websites, as well as on Ossetian websites, were extremely civil and positive in their opinions – the fact that is most unusual for the Russian Internet (Magomed Toriev, the Prague Watchdog website, 24. 06.2009).

After the attempt on the life of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov his duties are carried out by Prime Minister **Rashid Gaysanov** (who used to be the Minister of Economy under Ruslan Aushev), in compliance with the constitution of the Republic of Ingushetia.

On **June 22**, the day of the attempt on the life of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, a long-planned meeting between **Dmitry Medvedev** and **Ramzan Kadyrov** was held, after which the latter announced that the Russian President had asked him to take charge of the counter-terrorist struggle in Ingushetia, and added that the Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior are free to act as they see fit, while he will avenge his brother – the Ingush president – according to the common law of the highlanders. It should be remembered that Kadyrov had earlier said in his interviews to the Ekho Moskvyy radio station that he had personally settled his scores with all those who were in some way or other in the know concerning his father's assassination (to say nothing of those who were directly involved) – none of them were living by that moment, - and little was he concerned with whether the prosecutor's office was working on this or not. No reaction to those statements followed at the time, and it is unlikely that any reaction will appear now. However, they reveal the key distinction of the effective “counter-terrorist” practices as perceived and implemented in Chechnya: the principles of collective responsibility and collective punishment, burning down the houses of militants' families, taking hostages to compel their relatives to surrender, etc.

In 2005, while still holding the office of the prime minister of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, speaking in front of the newly elected parliament, stressed the unsatisfactory work of the law enforcement agencies in the neighbouring republics when it came to fighting the extremist

underground groups: *“These bandits are feeling comfortable in Dagestan, Ingushetia and some other republics. For example, my opinion is that the work of the Dagestan Ministry of Interior in doing away with the bandits is highly unsatisfactory. Militants find refuge there, as well as medical and rehabilitative aid after they receive wounds in armed clashes with the law enforcement forces, after that they easily go back across the border with Chechnya and continue to kill civil and police officers and vanish again on the territory of Dagestan only to reappear shortly afterwards when the time for the next planned attack arrives”*. For all that, Kadyrov felt positive that there were no ethnic Chechens left among the militants operating on the territory of Chechnya. However, at that time this discourse went hand in hand with the speculations about the need to expand the territory of his republic: *“The landmark has been moved back and forth over the recent years by just anybody, as their fancy led them, as a result, the territory of Chechnya has been considerably reduced... The issue of returning our old lands is a concern to the hearts of all of our people, and it is high time the parliament got down to examining this issue”*. Quite obviously, this declaration was met by the Dagestani and the Ingush authorities without any enthusiasm.

That time Kadyrov's claims were answered by a man who was not a representative of the authorities himself. On **June 24, Ruslan Aushev**, who had since 2002 been declining all offers to resume his work as a member of the republican authorities in any capacity, made his sensational declaration. He now publicly announced that he was ready to take charge of the office while Yunus-Bek Yevkurov remains in hospital, provided such move would be properly formalized from the point of view of the law. Aushev remarked that the neighbouring republic has plenty of problems of its own and that it would not hurt their president to turn his attention to those problems first.

Kadyrov's reaction followed immediately – he described the declarations of the ex-president as inappropriate and incorrect, and announced that it was precisely under Aushev that *“bandits of every kind and size have built themselves quite a comfortable nest in Ingushetia”*, that Aushev had not only failed to fight with members of the guerilla groups, but had also *“been concealing Maskhadov, Basayev and other bandit leaders on the territory of Ingushetia. We had repeatedly called attention to the fact that during Aushev's office the warlords were free to find refuge in Ingushetia, feeling quite safe there, yet all such information was met by Aushev with utmost hostility and he had done literally nothing to combat terrorism the way it was being done in Chechnya. The situation in today's Ingushetia is the painful echo of Aushev's irresponsible stance on the issue of counter-terrorist struggle.”*

It should be noted that even the official statistic on the progress of the counter-terrorist operation in Ingushetia portrays a different picture: the majority of those detained or killed in the recent years are by far not of the number of the veteran militants who could have “built themselves a comfortable nest”, mentioned by Kadyrov - but chiefly young people, who had joined the militant underground after Aushev left the office, during the presidency of Murat Zyazikov, who had given various security agencies a green light to operate on the territory of the republic at their own discretion.

Ruslan Aushev enjoys tremendous authority and support in Ingushetia, which would have become an invaluable tool in maintaining law and order, should the federal centre have decided to appoint him as its representative in the republic, however, in today's situation this would require support and approval from the country's leaders in whose book Aushev is quite definitely a most negative figure. Apart from Kadyrov, other persons who had expressed their harsh criticism of Aushev included Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Veterans' Affairs **Franz Klintsevich**, head of the Yedinaya Rossiya party central executive committee **Andrei Vorobiev**, member of the Moscow Duma **Mikhail Grishankov**, nevertheless, the spontaneous nature of their unanimous reaction seems rather doubtful.

It is obvious that Aushev perfectly realised that he would never be appointed to take up any office in Ingushetia (this is clear from his declaration of June 26 – see below), he was apparently pursuing quite a different goal: calling attention to the situation itself. As subsequent events showed,

he was successful in doing so.

On the same day of **June 24**, Ramzan Kadyrov arrived in Magas accompanied by the Chechen Minister of Interior **Ruslan Alkhanov** and Member of the Russian State Duma **Adam Delimkhanov**. They met with the interim president of Ingushetia **Rashid Gaysanov**, Minister of Interior **Ruslan Meyriev** and head of presidential administration **Vladimir Borschov**.

On the same day some Ingushetian websites published allegations that Kadyrov arrived to claim his rights to operate in Ingushetia. It is obvious that that intention also had its place, yet was not realised. Gaysanov said in a television interview that *“Ramzan arrived to give us support in a very difficult moment, he brought with him not only words of comfort and solidarity, but also some material assistance”*. According to him, Kadyrov reassured them that the work which he and Yunus-Bek Yevkurov had started in the recent months, will not only be carried along with, but will, in fact, be intensified: *“We heartily thank our brothers – the Chechen people – who proved to be ready to give all support they can to the people of Ingushetia”* (<http://www.ingushetia.ru/m-news/archives/011745.shtml#more>).

However, in actual practice, the scope of that “assistance” remained the same as it was before the attempt on the President’s life. As of the late July the Chechen police forces remained stationed at the place of their deployment in the village of Dattykh, where they arrived in early May, no conflicts between the local population and the Chechen have so far been registered.

Everyday life in the republic gives little reasons to suspect the presence of any emergency situation.

The general situation also remains more or less the same. In one alone a police officer was killed, three were wounded (an officer of the Chechen Ministry of Interior was killed by a landmine blast). On the evening of **June 24**, a joint special operation of the Ministry of Interior and the FSB department in the Republic of Ingushetia was conducted in the village of Ekazhevo, three militants were killed (among them was **Abdul-Malik Aliev**, who was wanted by the police, and a certain **Batygov**), one escaped. On the night of June 26 an armed clash took place in the village of *Muzhichi*, when a group of militants entered the village intending to replenish their stock of food from a local shop. One militant was killed, the rest managed to escape in the woods.

Despite the fact that following the attempt on the life of Ingushetia’s President the city of Nazran itself and the Nazran district were declared to be the zone of counter-terrorism operation, no restrictions on movement have been introduced for civilians (in the daytime, at least), no massive checks of passports (with the exception of the village of *Muzhichi* where such check was conducted after an armed clash with the militants).

Certain representatives of the Ingush opposition, which was formed in 2007-2008 in the course of the confrontation with Murat Zyazikov, who feared possible take-over of power from the outside, declared from the very start that they believed it necessary to hold the 7th extraordinary congress of the Ingush people.

The steering committee in charge of the congress was headed by **Magomed Khazbiev**, who remained in the opposition even after Zyazikov was removed from the office. Based on the declaration that the situation in the republic is out of control, the fact which will inevitably and immediately be used by outside forces in their own interest, the committee offered a number of scenarios for maintaining the stability in the republic, including one providing for an offer to an Aushev to take up the presidential office. Their persistence compelled the latter to make another public declaration on June 26: *“The decision on convocation of the Congress of People of Ingushetia, shall be made by the President or the acting President, in compliance with the current Constitution of the republic. It is highly important to observe this norm regardless of the circumstances”* (<http://www.ingushetia.org/news/19820.html>).

Aushev limited himself to repeating in brief and in a more civil manner what had earlier

been put rather bluntly by Rashid Gaysanov in a interview given to the local television: that holding any congress in the absence of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov was clearly unethical and the entire idea was a mere provocation since the situation in the republic remained under control (<http://www.ingushetia.ru/m-news/archives/011748.shtml#more>, <http://www.ingushetia.ru/m-news/archives/011735.shtml>).

The stance of many prominent figures in the republic was also quite reserved. On June 27 a meeting of representatives of various political parties, non-governmental and religious organizations – the total number of those attending was up to 50 persons - was held in the assembly hall of the Nazran city hall upon the initiative of the Daimokkh public organisation. Those invited included such prominent figures as Major General **Akhmed Khashagulgov**, deputy speaker of parliament **Zhunaid Musayev**, interim Minister of Public and Inter-Ethnic Relations **Magomed Markhiev**.

The common opinion was that appeals to hold such a congress may have easily led to confrontation in the society, while instigation to creation of any emergency situation is utterly unacceptable, - yet holding of any forums, conferences, congresses or other gatherings should not be in any way hindered for the purpose of free discussion of the situation and elaboration of sensible suggestions.

It appears that in the 8 months of his leadership in Ingushetia Yunus-Bek Yevkurov has succeeded in establishing both a stable system of governance in the republic, as well as the dialogue with the public – at least, in this aspect no signs of destabilisation or yet of particular necessity of “outside management” are observed.

News arriving to the North Caucasus from the federal centre are much more worrying.

On **June 27**, at a meeting with the members of the Russian Security Council in Sochi Russian President Dmitry Medvedev demanded from the security forces that they do not stand ceremonies with the terrorists and then asked the members of the Security Council to report on the number of militants that had been killed in the recent time: *“I have already spoken about it at a meeting with the colleagues present here, with the President of the Chechen Republic, that there is nothing to be sentimental about here. We need to act, to carry out operations and that is what we are doing now. I am expecting a report on the number of militants killed in such operations* (<http://interfax.ru/print.asp?sec=1446&id=87348>).

Such demands “to report on the progress” are causing more than little concern. It is well known that this sort of “statistic” is very easy to arrange, the security agencies have an enormous experience of doing this, not standing on ceremony either with the bandits, or with law-abiding civilians, or even with the law itself.

If the leaders of this country simply need dead bodies to account for their “success”, there will be dead bodies – this has never been much of a problem. A different question remains open to doubt: will this help to decrease the strength of the armed underground? In all probability, the victims of new fabricated cases will only help to recruit more members into the underground resistance groups.

We would like to hope that, in addition to these words uttered in the moment of wrath, the President had also provided more specific and clear instructions as to how to proceed with this task strictly within the framework of the law.

Ingushetia: positive changes and tendencies

The battle with the corruption, - the latter being described by President Yevkurov as the greatest evil in today’s Ingushetia, - has begun to bring its first results. Since late 2008

embezzlements to a total amount of 1 billion rubles had been brought to light by republican investigators (the official website of the Ministry of Interior of Ingushetia, 17.3.2009). Later a larger amount was given based on the results of an audit conducted by the Audit Chamber – 1,7 billion rubles, which makes up 34% of the republic's budget (*Vremya Novostey*, 14.4.2009). The total number of criminal cases opened was 23, 5 persons were declared wanted. The relatively small number of criminal cases can be apparently explained by a certain number of voluntary returns of embezzled funds to the authorities as part of the unofficial financial amnesty declared by the President of Ingushetia during last winter. Generally speaking, Yevkurov adopted a most unusual set of tools for combating corruption, attempting their maximum adaptation to the local situation. In addition to the amnesty, Yevkurov is doing his best to involve clan gatherings into public debate and condemnation of bribe-takers and embezzlers, whose names are entered onto lists which are subsequently passed on to the elders of the respective clan. The latest radical initiative became the cause of a scandal at the presidential administration, when its head **Ibragim Tochiev**, himself appointed by Yevkurov on **November 13, 2009**, was forced to leave his office. All the heads of local administration were offered to hand in their voluntary notices leaving a blank space in the place of the date, so that they could subsequently be easily dismissed at any moment (*Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 17.4.2009).

An actual imprisonment sentence – 3 years in a penal colony – was finally passed in the case of one of the major embezzlers – ex-minister of youth policies and sport **Issa Ozdoyev**. The leading experts of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, **Alikhan Sautiev** and **Ilyas Mankiev**, who had signed in 2007 fictitious acceptance certificates on allegedly completed construction works in respect of three residential blocks, although the actual construction works had not even started. In May criminal cases were opened on the fact of embezzlement of a large sum (105 mln rubles) by Ingushetia's Deputy Minister of Finance **A.Kh. Gandaloyev** (*the official website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Ingushetia*, 24.4.2009); and by the administration of the Dzheirakh district (misuse of public funds in the amount of 3,5 mln rubles) (*Ingushetia.Org*, 15.5.2008).

Last spring saw the declaration of an intensive war on car thefts and legalisation of vehicles stolen in other regions of the country, which has long been a special line of business for officers of the road police (*Memorial Human Rights Centre*).

There are also significant efforts to stop widespread use of vehicles with tinted windows and without number plates – such cars not only frequently become the cause of increased accident risk, but are also often used by militants in their attacks (*the website of the Ministry of Interior of Ingushetia*, 14.4.2009).

Yunus-Bek Yevkurov acknowledges that corruption has taken deep roots in the mentality of Ingushetia's civil servants. And even now, when an irreconcilable war on corruption was declared and has started to bring its first result, many continue to regard public money as their own, unable to fight the temptation “*to pinch what they have laid their hands on*”, as Yevkurov himself puts it, when finding themselves within reach from such amounts of money. It was precisely this that, according to him, became the reason for the massive reshuffle in the republican government and district administrations, also affecting the recently appointed officers (*RIA Novosti*, 18.4.2009). The Ingush president continues to build his team involving representatives of the minority groups as well as his former comrades-in-arms, in the hope of separating the top authorities from the open field for corruption. A former colleague of his General **Alexei Vorobyev** became the Secretary of the Security Council, while another career officer **Vladimir Borschev** was appointed as the head of presidential administration in mid-April.

Unfinished construction projects are not the only consequence of the current problem of massive embezzlement of public funds. The most worrying social consequence of this is the quite justified indignation of ordinary people in the republic. As the court judgement in the case of the above-mentioned Minister of Sport, Mr.Ozdoyev, described it: “the defendant had been

demonstrating stable delinquent behaviour in the form of open contempt for the norms of the existing law while holding the office of minister” (*the official website of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Ingushetia, 4.5.2009*).

In the highly tense situation of today’s Ingushetia this may well result in armed revenge against representatives of local authorities. The President of Ingushetia used a particular example to show how this may happen: *“While visiting a certain construction site, we found that the foundation pit had been dug out, the funds had been spent away, and, on top of all, the man whose house used to stand on the site of the current construction, a father of four, had simply been swindled, having been promised that once he gives away his plot for a school to be constructed on its place, he will receive a compensation amount of 1,200,000 rubles. That was the amount promised then. He was fed on promises for another year until I took up the office... I asked both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Housing and Construction: “You gave your promise to this man. Wherein lies the problem then?” They said: “Yes, we did promise”. “Well, why then did you not pay!?” And then it turned out that even that compensation money, those 1,200,000 rubles had simply been pocketed by them... Then we went to see that man, his house was some 3 by 6 meters in size, the walls were made of veneer, there was gas heating there. That man, he is a master of sports, a boxing coach. He said: “Was it not for my wife and the children, I would have solved the problem long ago by simply taking a gun and shooting all of them”. And what could I reply to him? I told the Minister of Construction then: “If you and your family move into his house today and give your house to this man and his family, I will allow you to keep your job as a minister”. He publicly acknowledged that he understood this and agreed to do so. But he did not do it. He chose to hand in his notice. But the criminal case will be opened anyway. (Gazeta.Ru, 12.3.2009).*

Serious steps were made in the way of reinforcing control over the work of law enforcement agencies. A hotline was opened to enable residents of Ingushetia to complain about violations of their rights. Moreover, a Public Commission on Human Rights under the President of the Republic was created in late 2008; its members include representatives of the security structures, NGOs, members of parliament and ordinary member of public. The Public Council of the Ingushetia Ministry of Interior started its work in late April, its goal being coordination of the work of law enforcement services with the instruments of public and civil control.

The reshuffle of the police personnel is currently underway (*the website of the Ministry of Interior of Ingushetia, 11.4.2009*).

According to all grass-root accounts, police officers can now finally be found on the streets, at least, in the daytime, conducting patrol and guard service. However, locals claim that they are still rarely seen on the streets of Ingushetia’s towns and villages at night. In the past years police officers were hard to find outside the checkpoints and police stations, because of their fear for their own safety. The republic’s leaders were updating the material and technical base and infrastructure, purchasing arms, combat and specific equipment, which was expected to improve the conditions of service for the police personnel.

According to Minister of Interior **Ruslan Meyriev**, *“we can speak of the police forces having on the whole finally seen light at the end of the tunnel, renewed their strength and found encouragement to take the initiative into its hands, and they are now determined to go through thick and thin in their struggle with the crime. These police forces will help us to finally achieve order in our fatherland (the official website of the Ministry of Interior of Ingushetia, 17.3.2009).*

The President now frequently holds meetings with representatives of the local human rights and public organizations, as well as with the families of abducted, murdered and convicted residents of Ingushetia.

Another positive aspect of his work is the noticeable intensification of the work in conciliating families who are in the situation of blood feud. This work is being done by the local elders with strong support of President Yevkurov. This initiative has already helped to bring more

than 20 families to reconciliation (the average “reconciliation rate” for the past years was about 5-6 families a year). Blood feud has become a grave and urgent problem in the republic, contributing to the existing civil tensions in its small community. The official data alone show that, as of early 2009, 180 families had declared blood revenge on their adversaries, and this number continues to grow. There have been cases when blood revenge was declared against police officers after special operations when suspects of terrorist activities were killed by police forces. Thus, two of the brothers of **Islam Patiev**, who was shot dead in a car together with **Ruslan Aliev**, the latter was giving him a lift on **March 23, 2009** (see: www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m163322.htm) came to the police officer whom they believed to be responsible for their brother’s death and declared blood feud on him. The third eldest brother has already started on the path of war – he was one of the persons who opened gunfire at the house belonging to that police officer (*RIA Novosti*, 18.4.2009). And that is notwithstanding the fact that Islam Patiev was officially wanted for involvement in grave crimes. What can be said then about dozens of innocent people killed by law enforcement agencies?!

In the meantime in Ingushetia...

Despite all recent efforts of the President of Ingushetia towards stabilisation, the current socio-economic and socio-political situation in the republic remains rather critical.

Ingushetia has, quite naturally, also been affected by the financial crisis aggravating its already complicated economic situation. In the first quarter of 2009 of the total economically active population only 45,1% were employed, while the remaining 54,9% were qualified as unemployed. Many of those who do have jobs are not paid salaries on time: the arrears of wages for the first quarter of 2009 totaled more than 35 mln rubles (*the official website of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Ingushetia*, 8.5.2009).

Despite the firm resolution of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov to reshuffle the republic’s bureaucratic machinery, which had completely discredited itself over the recent years, this process is moving rather slowly with numerous obstacles on the way. The President’s desperate attempts are largely ‘neutralised’ by the massive sabotage of the republic’s bureaucracy, primarily the law enforcement services. Civil servants accused of corruption do get convicted, yet they receive unreasonably mild sentences or even escape incarceration sentences at all. The abovementioned officials of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, Mankiev and Sautiev, who had embezzled 81 mln rubles, got away with mere fines, while Ozdoyev received a minimum sentence, although he continued to commit crimes while under prosecution (*the official website of the Public Prosecutor’s office of the Republic of Ingushetia*, 8.5.2009). Rumours rapidly spread among the republic’s population that the defendants “negotiate their way out” with the law enforcement services at different levels of investigation and trial.

On the other hand, the judicial practice in respect of persons accused of participation in illegal armed groups is rather reminiscent of ex-President Zyazikov’s times. A good example of this is the case of the infinitely protracted “Case of the Twelve” – the trial of the alleged participants in the 2004 attack on Ingushetia. The court hearings were practically completed in early summer 2008, yet later endless pretexts began to be brought up in order to protract the trial (the “Memorial” had described in its earlier bulletins in detail the various methods which the law enforcement services were using to the best of their abilities to achieve this goal: www.memo.ru/2008/12/26/2612081.htm#0.5). Apparently, the court was waiting for the adoption of the federal law which excluded examination of terrorism-related cases from the competence of juries. By the time of its signing by the RF President Dmitry Medvedev (on **December 30, 2008**), all the judges of Ingushetia’s Supreme Court had declined to participate in the trial, under various pretexts. The nomination was then taken by the Chairman of the Supreme Court of Ingushetia **Mikhail Zadvornov**, but even after that the trial was not resumed. The families of the defendants held pickets outside the premises of the Presidential administration and the Ministry of Interior on

March 9 and 10. On **March 12** the mothers of the defendants were received by the President of Ingushetia. They did not speak of the detainment conditions in which their sons were kept, but were only asking to help achieve the resumption of the process. The President promised to take the situation under his personal control and see to that the trial is properly resumed (the *Respublica Ingushetia* website, 11.3.2009). And, indeed, on **April 23**, the hearings resumed, yet after several sessions the chairman of the court decided to return to the preliminary hearings, practically meaning - to reverse the course of the trial and start all over again) upon a petition from the prosecution, although the defence attorneys claim that no one had heard requests to that effect from the prosecution during the hearings. On **June 17** the Supreme Court of Ingushetia ruled on dismissing the petition of the defendants to refer their case to a jury (*Vremya novostey*, 7.5.2009).

The investigation into the assassination of **Magomed Yevloyev**, a prominent opposition leader and the owner of the *Ingushetiya.Ru* website went on according to a similar scenario (*see the summer and autumn 2008 and winter 2008-2009 bulletins*). In March 2009, the Investigative Committee of the Public Prosecutor's Ingushetia Department decided to initiate criminal proceedings on the fact of his unlawful arrest by police officers during which Yevloyev was killed, but the Public Prosecutor's Office of Ingushetia reversed this decision on purely formal grounds, returning the materials to the investigators "for further examination", which ended up in an order on dismissal of the criminal case. With regard to the criminal proceedings on the actual assassination of Magomed Yevloyev, the investigating authorities continue to insist that he became a victim of an accidental gunshot (Article 109 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, "infliction of death by negligence") – it is with this conclusion that the materials of the case were submitted to court at the end of 2008. However, the examination of the case on its merits has been repeatedly adjourned. The ground for the latest delay was the petition of the defence attorney whose defendant is under a pledge not to leave the city, to transfer the examination procedures to a different region, since a blood feud has been declared against him in Ingushetia and he fears for his life. On **April 21**, the Supreme Court of Ingushetia finally ruled on examination of the criminal case on the territory of the republic, however, the date on which the trial would start, was not announced. Earlier, the spokespersons for the Yevloyevs family insisted that the Supreme Court of Ingushetia recognizes the unlawfulness of his detention, and attempted to achieve the re-qualification of the criminal case as initiated pursuant to Article 105 ("homicide") instead of Article 109 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ("infliction of death by negligence"). This has not yet been achieved. The attorney of the Yevloyevs family, **Magomed Gandarov**, has little doubt that the investigating authorities are under pressure from the former republican authorities, who, should effective investigation be achieved, risk becoming themselves defendants in the case. This is extremely undesirable for Ingushetia's security services and they are doing their best to hinder the course of the trial.

However, these problems fade into insignificance if we are to examine the truly critical situation in Ingushetia. According to Ruslan Meyriev, the former Minister of Interior, "*half of all crimes registered in the republic belong to the category of grave crimes and felony, committed with an extreme degree of cynicism*". At the same time, the figure for registered general criminal offences of medium gravity (frauds, thefts, etc) is comparatively low in Ingushetia. Comparing the criminal situation in Ingushetia with the region where he had previously worked for 25 years – the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District, Meyriev noted that "*the density of crimes committed up in the North is dozens of times higher than in Ingushetia, yet the gravity of offences is far greater here than it is there*" (*the website of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Ingushetia*, 17.3.2009).

According to the official figures of Ingushetia's Ministry of Interior, over the first quarter (January-March) of 2009 the law enforcement services had curbed the activity of 28 leaders and members of the armed underground, of the above number 27 were killed due to offering armed resistance, one was arrested. A considerable quantity of weapons, ammunition, and explosives were seized from the militants. Over the three spring months this year 18 officers of law enforcement services and two civilians have been killed and 44 people have been wounded as a result of attacks

of illegal armed groups. The figures for grave crimes and felony have also risen, as has the crime solving rate (*the website of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Ingushetia, 14.4.2009*).

According to the open data published by Russian media agencies and summarised on the www.voinenet.ru website, over the three spring months Ingushetia had lost 16 persons and 37 officers of the security forces alone were wounded. For the spring 2008 the same sources give the figures of 11 officers killed and 46 wounded (which are considerably lower than the figures for the winter 2008-2009, when President Yevkurov had just assumed his office, inheriting the legacy of President Zyazikov of an almost uncontrollable situation and unrestrained reign of terror: the then figures were 21 officers killed and 55 wounded (*see the respective bulletins of the Memorial*).

The top positions of the spring statistics belonged to villages of the mountainous woodland part of the Sunzhensky district – the counter-terrorist regime has been repeatedly re-introduced here, and in late March this regime was in effect in six villages at once: Nesterovskaya, Chemulga, Dattikh, Muzhichi, Galashki and Alkhasty (that is, the counter-terrorist operation extended across the entire territory of Ingushetia's mountainous woodland). On **March 31**, news came of an armed clash breaking out in the zone of the counter-terrorist operation, in the woodland near the village of *Arshty* of the *Sunzhensky district* (*Kavkazsky uzel, 31.3.2009*), the militants chose to avoid open confrontation and retreated. Three stocked bunkers capable to accommodate up to 20 persons were discovered in the vicinity of the village of *Arshty* (*Gazeta.Ru, 2.4.2009*).

This new phenomenon speaks of considerable organizational and tactical restructuring of Ingushetia's armed underground, since in the previous years the militants rather chose to act in small groups mainly in the flatland areas of Ingushetia, in the villages and towns of the Malgobek and Nazran districts and on the flatland in the Sunzhensky district. That said, the activity of the militants in the flatland areas did not subside during the spring, however; some of them, apparently, had joined their forces and are now based and operate in the woodland, similarly to the way it has long been happening in Dagestan and Chechnya.

Terrorist attacks related to the militants' "educational programme" which they are implementing in the society by means of fear tactics – through gunfire attacks on, and arsons of, shops, restaurants, saunas, gambling clubs as well as through intimidation and murders of their owners. The militants themselves see this as "*outreach and educational work*" in enforcing "*the legitimate Islamic rule*".

The militants' terrorist activity and the operations of the security services in counteracting it, supplement the already existing uncontrollable rise of general crime. Criminals, who commit offences with purely mercenary motives or as an act of revenge, infrequently attempt to make their actions pass off for Islamic militants' assaults or for special operations of the security forces (night shelling attacks and executions, abductions by men in camouflage etc). Below we will give numerous examples of crimes against person and property a significant part of which undoubtedly belongs to that category of such "disguised" ordinary criminal offences.

The following statistical extract covering the month of March alone(!) is fairly representative of the general current statistics of the hostilities.

On **March 5**, in the village of *Surkhakhi*, a blast killed six FSB and police officers of various rank, from captain to lieutenant-colonel, including the Superintendent of the Criminal Division of the Nazran district police department **Mikhail Zarkhin**; three others were wounded, one of them died in late April. The operations group was called for clearing a mine found on the road near the village, but during their work the booby-trap exploded (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m161955.htm).

On **March 6**, a federal Russian contract serviceman was killed in the vicinity of the village of *Dattikh* of the *Sunzhensky district*.

On **March 12**, at 11:25 pm, in the village of *Ordzhonidzevskaya*, a car driven by a police

officer came under gunfire. The officer was killed.

On **March 13**, in the village of *Ekazhevo* of the *Nazran district*, a patrol car of the traffic police office came under automatic gunfire. One traffic police officer was wounded.

On **March 14**, in the village of *Troitskaya*, the village police station came under fire from a grenade launcher and automatic guns. The attack lasted several minutes, then fire was returned. . No-one was injured as a result of the attack, the building, however, was damaged.

On **March 15**, **Adam Barakhoyev**, officer of the Ministry of Emergency Situations rescue service, was shot dead in *Nazran*.

On **March 18**, A police guard at the entrance of the Ministry of Interior premises yard in Nazran was wounded, presumably from a sniper's rifle.

On **March 23**, two unidentified armed individuals attacked police officers in *Karabulak*. One officer of the temporary operational grouping was injured, the attackers were shot dead.

On **March 24**, at about 8:00a.m., unidentified individuals driving a white VAZ-2107 vehicle opened gunfire at a group of engineers of the Ministry of Interior Internal Troops on the *Kantyshevo-Nazran* motorway. No one was injured.

On **March 26**, a VAZ-2114 car belonging to a certain Ichiev, an officer of the local district police department, was blasted in the village of *Ordzhonikidzevskaya*. The owner was gravely wounded as a result.

On **March 26-27**, an armed clash broke out in the village of *Ordzhonikidzevskaya* between the security officers and a group of armed militants hiding in one of the flats of a multi-storey block. The militants were killed, while the two women who were together with them in the flat surrendered.

On **March 28**, five bodies of Ingush hunters killed with finishing fatal shots in their heads were found in the woodland on the border of *Ingushetia's Sunzhensky district* and *Chechnya*. In all probability, they were killed by militants, yet the ill-fame of the security services has penetrated the minds of the population by now, so the rumours are persistently spreading across Ingushetia both by word of mouth and through Internet communities claiming that the murders were committed by unidentified security officers. The rumours were only dispelled when after a special operation in the Sunzhensky district conducted together with the special forces of the Chechen Ministry of Interior several guns belonging to the killed hunters were found near the killed militants, i.e. when independent empirical evidence was produced.

It is quite obvious that the armed underground remains strong and active. Information about large-scale terrorist attacks in preparation regularly appears in the news.

On **March 27**, the FSB Ingushetia Department delivered a press release claiming that the militants of the so-called 'Sunzhensky guerilla detachment' were planning to use a woman, who had surrendered herself to the authorities in the village of *Ordzhonikidzevskaya*, as a suicide bomber, for which purpose they had specifically bought a KamAZ vehicle (*the website of Ingushetia's Ministry of Interior*, 27.3.2009).

On **May 15**, a powerful man-portable infrared homing surface-to-air *Igla* missile was discovered in the vicinity of the *Magas* airport, in an unfinished building in the village of *Troitskaya*. It is believed that the militants were planning to shoot down a civil plane using this weapon, because such would have absolutely no means of protection against it (*the website of the Ingushetia Ministry of Interior*, 15.5.2009).

However, the Memorial Human Rights Centre has no independent empirical evidence supporting these allegations. Such information appears to be rather undesirable for the security services themselves: the news of an *Igla* missile discovered on the territory for which they are responsible, would far more likely make their achievements look doubtful, rather than speak of any

success.

In *mid-May* a large-scale counterterrorist operation planned to be conducted in conjunction with the Chechen law enforcement services was declared on the territory of the mountainous woodland of the Sunzhensky district and on the territory of the entire republic. The main operations are conducted in the four key areas – in the villages of *Dattykh*, *Alkun* and *Arshty*, as well as in the surroundings of the Chechen village of *Bamut*. Significant forces of the Ministry of Interior and the FSB department in Ingushetia, as well as their counterparts from Chechnya, were pulled in to carry out this operation. Military helicopters and K-9 unit officers with their dogs were involved.

On the night of *May 17* the militants were forced by the security forces to leave the surroundings of the villages of *Nizhniy* and *Verkhniy Alkun* – the two largest settlements in the *Sunzhensky district* where they had been on the run for some time secretly and briefly penetrating into the villages by night. Leaving *Alkun* the militants tried to carjack three vehicles, including one KamAZ vehicle, and to take several locals away with them as hostages, yet they were dispersed, two of them were killed (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163947.htm).

On *May 23* it was announced that on the motorway between the villages of *Surkhakhi* and *Yandare* an armed group consisting of 15 militants moving around in three cars were arrested by law enforcement officers. They turned out to be local young men aged 18 to 33 (*the Ministry of Interior official website*, 23.5.2009). This information appeared to be rather implausible at first: it usually takes law enforcement services several days and heavy weapons to capture such large groups of militants. What was also strange was that the video tape showing the militants lying on the ground was not demonstrated by any central television channels. A rather unexpected interpretation of this was received from the militants' website *Kavkaz-Center*. Quoting some locals, the website claims that the young men were in reality not militants but members (Murids) of the religious community (vird) of followers of Batal-Hajji – a much-respected in Ingushetia Sufi sheikh, himself a native of *Surkhakhi* (they are known as "*batalhajjintsy*" here or, pejoratively, "*batlaki*"). This vird owns a network of petrol filling stations which have recently frequently been set on fire because of criminal wars. The arrested group was reportedly on their way to another "rendezvous" with the racketeers (*Kavkaz-Center*, 23/5/2009). It is commonly held in Ingushetia that the petrol filling stations targeted by racketeering belonged to a local businessman, a certain **Polonkoyev** capable of maintaining "an army of private guards" to protect them. This version seems to have been confirmed: on the following day, 8 of those detained were released, while the rest were released the day after. The staff of the Memorial have been told that no criminal proceedings were initiated despite an entire arsenal of weapons confiscated: the importance of combating ordinary crime fades in comparison to the necessity to fight with the militant underground.

It should be noted that the large-scale operation launched in Ingushetia on May 16 included, as before, participation of federal servicemen. Unlike the President of Chechnya, the Ingush President did not demand to exclude federal security services: "*We will not be able to manage with this task without the assistance from assigned officers*", he said in one of his interviews (*Gazeta.Ru*, 12.3.2009). Unlike the Chechen Ministry of Interior, the respective Ministry in Ingushetia was staffed according to the existing standards for a peaceful region. The President of Ingushetia insisted on expanding the Ministry of Interior personnel by 200 officers and considered this a major progress.

Finally, the gravity of the situation and the growth of the militant ranks is further confirmed by the fact that last the Ingush leaders for the first time declared their readiness to introduce amnesty for those militants who 'have no blood on their hands' – an intention contrary to the measures chosen by President Kadyrov (see below). Yunus-Bek Yevkurov described the mechanism along which the amnesty works in the following way: "*The identity and the background of each person willing to surrender will be checked by law enforcement services. If it proves to be true that he has no blood on his hands, I will appeal to his parents, to make them take him here under my*

promise of safety. In the course of personal communication with him, I will see whether he is indeed resolved to return to normal law-abiding life... Ordinary members of the illegal armed groups do not even need to go through the official amnesty procedure. A man who has not been involved in any grave crimes or felony will be amnestied by virtue of my word". The amnesty was planned to maintain a low profile keeping the names of those amnestied in secrecy to avoid possible revenge on the part of the militants targeting the families of the former. Yevkurov did not exclude the possibility of certain indulgence even in respect of those who have committed grave crimes (*RIA Novosti*, 17.4.2009).

Ingushetia: special operations follow the same old scenario

"Targeted" special operations of the Ingush police and the federal servicemen in settlements and on motorways continue to be their primary method of combating the terrorist underground. *"We could not probably do without it", - to this effect ran the repeatedly declared opinion of President Yevkurov. "I believe – he often said, - that it is precisely the special operations and frequently conducted preventive actions that today are the most effective and professional part of the counter-terrorist work. Especially, target special operations. The latest incident with these suicide attackers was yet another excellent proof of this"* (*Gazeta.Ru*, 12.3.2009). Yevkurov was speaking about the large-scale special operation in elimination of a group of suicide bombers held in *Nazran* on **February 12, 2009**. That was when the militants blew themselves up with hundreds of kilos of explosives, dozens of people were injured, several dozen buildings were damaged (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/02/m161207.htm).

However, the memory of Ingushetia's people also retains other special operations, carried out with major violations of the law, making the majority doubt the general legitimacy of such operations.

Thus, on **March 26 – 27**, a large-scale operation in elimination of a group of militants hiding in a two-storey block of eight flats in the village of *Ordzhonikidzevskaya*. The place where the militants were hiding was exposed to open fire from helicopters, armoured vehicles, 'Shmel' rocket launchers. The building was severely damaged. Several hours after the operation started two women – **Patimat Mutalieva** and **Madina Ozdoyeva** – came out and willfully surrendered. The first woman turned out to be a sister of **Khassan Mutaliev** – a militant leader killed on **February 12** this year during the above-mentioned armed clash and the militants' suicide bombing in *Nazran*, and of **Hussein Mutaliev** killed on **March 15, 2007** killed near his own house (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2007/03/m70034.htm). The casualties for this clash stand at 2 militants killed, three police officers wounded (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 27.3.2009).

The Memorial has been told that the residents of the block of flats had not been informed of anything before the start of the operation, there were not even any attempts to evacuate them before the operation. Those who tried to venture out were threatened with firearms. They were later allowed to go out but not back in this time, although the militants only began to offer any significant resistance at about 9:00 pm. In the morning the fierce fire exchange resumed ceasing only by 1:00 pm, when, according to the official statement, the second militant was finally killed (*the website of the Ministry of Interior*, 27.3.2009). The cordon was only removed at about 6:00 pm. Upon their return to their flats, the owners discovered that certain valuables, money and jewellery were missing. One flat had been burnt down, apparently, as a result of a direct hit from a grenade-launcher (www.memo.ru/2009/04/02/0204092.htm).

On **April 10**, the surrendered women were released. They are now considered for testifying in the criminal case. There are reports of that this was due to President Yevkurov's alleged personal intervention, since he spoke to the women in person and later insisted on their release. Mutalieva assured the President that she had been coerced to join the militants (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163694.htm www.memo.ru/2009/04/02/0204092.htm <http://gzt.ru/politics/2009/04/12/222501.html>).

One other special operation also drew wide public attention and required personal intervention of the President of the Republic.

On **April 21**, at about 12:30, on the outskirts of the *village of Surkhakhi* of the *Nazran district* in Ingushetia federal servicemen killed a local, **Adam Alievich Aushev**, born 1987, resident of *Azovskaya str., 2*. According to eye-witnesses, Aushev's Lada-Priora car came under fire opened by the servicemen from their mobile post on the motorway between the villages of *Ekazhevo* and *Surkhakhi*. The spot where Aushev was killed was cordoned off. The local police officers, including the Deputy Minister of Interior, were only allowed to go through the cordon when the Minister himself, **Ruslan Meyriev**, arrived. A press release published by the FSB department for Ingushetia declared that Adam Aushev had "*refused to obey the orders of the law enforcement officers and opened gunfire at them*". He was allegedly killed by retaliation fire; during the search conducted thereafter, the servicemen allegedly "discovered" a Kalashnikov gun and ammunition in Aushev's car.

The official version is contradicted by the testimonies of Adam Aushev's family. Shortly after 11:00 am he left home in his car driving in the direction of *Nazran*. The car did not have a number plate because it had only been bought recently and had not yet been registered at the traffic police. At a traffic police post Aushev's car was stopped for checking. Eye-witnesses, Adam's fellow villagers, claim that the police officers had no problem with his movements or person, and even asked him to bring them cigarettes on his way back. But on his way back, his car was exposed to direct fire by the FSB officers at the mobile post.

The family and the villagers from Adam Aushev's village, including the village administration, describe him as a thoroughly positive person. The local precinct police officer confirmed that Adam Aushev was not in any way wanted by the police and that on **April 21** at about midday he saw Aushev at a shop in the village of *Ekazhevo*, where the latter was buying two packs of cigarettes. Adam was not a smoker himself. He had been actively practicing sports since his childhood, had on many occasions become a winner of numerous wrestling competitions. Adam Aushev's family believe that he was killed for the sole reason that he was a brother of **Magomed Alievich Aushev**, who was killed by FSB officers on **December 6, 2008** in the course of a special operation in the village of *Barsuki*. Magomed Aushev had been accused of being the leader of the so-called "Nazran Jamaat" and of having organized several attacks on law enforcement officers and servicemen (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2008/12/m159034.htm).

On **April 23** the Memorial office in Nazran received a written statement from Adam Aushev's mother, **Eset Ausheva**, in which she was asking for assistance in investigating the murder of her son (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163485.htm).

On **May 1** at a community council in the village of *Verkhniye Achaluki*, the Aushevs declared their resolution to demand from the authorities proper and timely investigation of the murder and identification of those responsible for it.

On **May 4** President Yevkurov invited the elderly members of the Aushev family to meet him at his residence. The conversation, as frank as it was hard for both sides, lasted for over 1,5 hours. Yevkurov described the murder of Adam Aushev as "totally unjustified". The course of investigation is now monitored by the president of the republic himself (*Ingushetia.Org*, 4.5.2009, *Ingnews.ru*, 5.5.2009).

A black Lada-Priora vehicle without a number plate had long featured in as a vehicle frequently spotted during the attacks on the police, used for drive by shooting, thus the security services used this as a pretext to pull over Aushev. (website of the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Ingushetia , 23.3.2009). However, a similar black Lada-Priora vehicle was used by attackers after the death of Adam Aushev as well: for example, when the house of **Tamerlan Pliev** in *Nazran* was exposed to gunfire attack on **May 13** (*Ingushetia.Org*, 13.5.2009), in the murder of Ministry of Emergencies officer **Ruslan Geroyev** on **May 14** (the website of the *Ministry of Interior of the*

Republic of Ingushetia, 14.5.2009). A similar car also frequently features in abduction cases. On **February 17, 2009** **Magomed Daurbekov** was taken away in such a car and shortly afterwards he was found murdered (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/02/m161676.htm). On **April 3**, a similar car abducted **Gapur Tankiev** (see below for more detail). Rumours of proverbial “death squadrons” are now once again spreading across Ingushetia.

Another representative operation held on **March 23 in Karabulak**, when 24-year-old native of the village of *Mayskoye* **Islam Patiev** and 42-year-old native of *Nazran* **Ruslan Aliev** were killed in a VAZ-2110 vehicle. According to the official version, they opened gunfire at police officers and were killed by retaliation fire. Eyewitnesses from among the locals do not confirm this. They claim that yet another extrajudicial execution had taken place and that the attackers themselves prevented them from taking one of the men into hospital deliberately waiting until he died (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m163322.htm, *ITAR-TASS*, 23.3.2009, *Kavkazsky uzel*, 23.3.2009).

It was soon revealed that only one passenger of the car – Islam Patiev – had certain connections with the armed underground, while Ruslan Aliev was simply giving him a lift. The investigator from the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor’s Office, in charge of this case, met with the Aliev family and said that Ruslan had been killed accidentally only because he happened to be near Patiev at the time, and that law enforcement services had nothing against him. Shortly afterwards, the father of Ruslan, Magomed Aliev, met with the President of Ingushetia. The latter expressed his deepest condolences and said he knows far too well that Ruslan was innocent. He also promised material and financial assistance to Ruslan’s family. Aliev had six children. Currently, his family is living in his father’s house. On **April 8**, two weeks after Ruslan’s death, an unwarranted search was conducted in that house. A large group of law enforcement officers spent several hours rummaging the house without producing any identification documents. During all this time, the residents of the house, including children, were kept at gunpoint. (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163318.htm).

On **April 22** armed men in camouflage broke into the house of the **Patiev** family in *Karabulak (Targimskaya str, 27)*. The carried out unsanctioned search in the house produced nothing illegal there. When leaving, they took away a member of the family, **Aslan Patiev**, away with them. The appeals of the family to authorities of various ranks, including the administration of the President of Ingushetia, did not help to clarify the fate of the abducted man – nobody seemed to know anything about either a similar special operation, or about Patiev. The first progress in the situation was only made after the President, who was then in Moscow, but stayed in touch with the Minister of Construction of the Republic of Ingushetia. The latter came to the Patievs’ house upon an order from the President. Only after this, in the evening of **April 24**, the family learnt that Aslan was being kept BC МБД ПИ and had been charged with violation of Part 2 of Article 222 (“illegal storage of firearms”) and Part 2 of Article 208 (“participation in illegal armed formations”) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, . On the following day the attorney hired by his family was allowed to see him. On **May 4**, Aslan Patiev was released, after signing a pledge not to leave the town.

As can be seen from above, the President of Ingushetia was constantly compelled to intervene into rather extreme situations resulting from the illegal actions of servicemen and law enforcement services.

Ingushetia: a new wave of civilian murders

During the first months of 2009, “Memorial” registered a drastic rise in the number of homicides both resulting from special operations of the law enforcement services and from terrorist attacks, as well as due to the rise in general crime: 59 violent deaths have registered over the period of January-April (www.memo.ru/2009/04/28/2804091.htm).

The already high numbers of casualties resulting from the operation of both law enforcement services and the militant groups (including those who were declared to have been members of the militant underground after their death) have long become a routine, these figures have come to be considered as “the norm” for Ingushetia’s statistical reports. Yet, the sharp rise in the number of homicides, of both men and women, who appear to have no direct or indirect connection with either the militant underground or the law enforcement services shows a clearly disturbing trend of the past months becoming a growing concern for Ingushetia’s public.

Below we are giving some statistics on the casualties among Ingushetia’s civilians who have fallen victims to the sweeping terror orchestrated by unknown forces which so far decline to openly assume the responsibility for it.

On **March 3**, a certain **Torshkhoyeva**, a mother of four minor children, received grave injuries.

On **March 4**, in the village of *Verkhniye Achaluki*, unidentified gunmen opened fire at a VAZ-2114 vehicle. 42-year-old Sonya Garakoyeva, a local businesswoman who was driving it, was killed instantly.

On **March 30**, 55-year-old **Eset Esmurzieva** was murdered in her own home in the village of *Nizhniye Achaluki* in the *Malgobek district*. Unidentified gunmen opened point-blank fire at her, beat up her son and fled.

On **April 7**, a 54-year-old resident of the village of *Chermen* in the *Republic of North Ossetia – Alania* **Lemka Batyrova** was murdered in *Nazran*. She was hit by a stolen car in which the carjacker was trying to escape the police pursuit (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 13.4.2009).

On **April 8**, the body of **Khatimat Yevloyeva**, a 54-year-old resident of the town of *Karabulak*, bearing signs of violent death was found in the *Sunzha river* on the outskirts of the village of *Plievo*.

On the night of **April 10** eight unidentified men armed with automatic guns broke into the *House No 47 on Sheripova str in the village of Arshty* and shot dead the owner of the house, 33-year-old **Girey-Khan Ferzauli**. This crime was reportedly committed by the gang led by **Rustam Makhauri**, who was hiding in the mountainous woodland surrounding the village (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163689.htm, the website of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Ingushetia, 10.4.2009).

On **April 15**, at about 8.30 pm, an unidentified individual shot the 20-year-old **Khava Tochieva** in the head, in a house located in *Lyanova str in Nazran*. The young woman died on the way to the republican clinical hospital.

On **April 19**, at about 9:10 pm in *Nazran* unidentified men broke into the house of **Musa Esmurziev**, a prominent religious leader, and opened fire at point-blank. Musa was wounded and died on the way to hospital. The murder of a wellknown and respected man received a wide and indignant response across the republic. Many, including the president himself, attended Esmurziev’s funeral and expressed their deepest condolences to his family and friends (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163697.htm, *Ingushetia.Org*, 20.4.2009)

On the same day an attempt was committed on the life of the ex-chief of security of the Republican Clinical hospital, 77-year-old **Saypi Mogushkov**. The man received grave wounds and was taken to hospital where he died later (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 19.4.2009).

On **May 1** at about 4:25 pm unidentified men drove up to the house of the 32-year-old **Said-Ibragim Kalimatov**, in the village of *Troitskaya*, in a white VAZ-2107 vehicle without a number plate. They called out the master of the house and shot him dead from an automatic rifle in front of the gates. Kalimatov died on the spot. He belonged to an old and much revered in Ingushetia Arabic clan of Sayyid-Ibrahiymi who had long moved into Ingushetia to preach the Islamic religion and adopted a local surname. The murdered man was well-versed in Islam, recited the Quran and had a

reputation of an exceptionally decent respectable man (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163723.htm, *Kavkazsky uzel*, 4.5.2009).

On the night of **May 8**, in the village of *Arshty*, unidentified individuals broke into the house of a certain **Khatsiev**, a local resident, dragged him outside and shot him in the head. According to the *Ingushetia.Org* website, the murdered man was a farmer.

On **May 9**, at about 6:00 am, on *the Gagarina str* in the village of *Ordzhonikidzevskaya*, unidentified men shot dead 54-year-old Magomed Aliev and his 46-year-old wife Leyla Alieva in their own backyard. The assassins escaped in a black VAZ-2112 motorcar. The 26-year-old son of the murdered couple **Abdul-Malik** is on the police wanted list on suspicion of involvement in the attack on several of Ingushetia's villages in June 2004 (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163722.htm, the website of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Ingushetia, 9.5.2009).

On the night of **May 11**, in the village of *Arshty* in *House No 6* on *Sharipova str*, masked men in camouflage shot dead **Sultanov Suleyman Suleymanovich**, born 1976, in front of his family.

On the night of **May 14**, on *Shosseynaya Str* in the village of *Troitskaya* an unidentified man broke into a private house and shot dead the landlady, **Yakha Oligova**, born 1944. The woman was taken to the intensive care unit of the Sunzhensky central district hospital in a grave condition (*Ingushetia.Org*, 14.5.2009).

In the evening of **May 14**, the house belonging to **Khamatkhan Kodzoyev** was exposed to gunfire in the village of *Kantyshevo* (*Kodzoyeva str*, 86). The man received gunshot wounds and was taken to hospital. He was not a police officer and had nothing to do with law enforcement services (*Ingushetia.Org*, 15.5.2009).

It is hard to offer a satisfactory explanation for this escalation of violence. Many people in Ingushetia believe that a great share of these crimes, disguised as attacks of the militants or "special operations" of law enforcement services, are in reality mere settling of scores between the locals: considering the situation in the republic, such occurrences can be easily blamed on counter-terrorist operations, thus, leading the investigation astray. The criminal situation in Ingushetia is therefore becoming all the more critical. One of the leaders of the most radical opposition forces, **Magomed Khazbiev**, believes that over the past 6 months the President of the Republic has not been able to regain the control over the situation: "the squadrons of death" are still actively operating in Ingushetia, the response to which is the escalation of violence on the part of the militants whose ranks are swelling on account of new members joining them from an ever wider range of social groups (*Radio Ekho Moskv*y, 10.5.2009).

This point of view is becoming increasingly popular. The first signs of popular disappointment in the new President have appeared. The opinion that he has taken upon himself a burden far exceeding his abilities, is gaining more and more support. Nevertheless, the general confidence in Yunus-Bek Yevkurov remains strong. People are naturally inspired by his energetic and sincere attempts to help his nation.

Ingushetia: civilian abductions continue to be popular practice

Abductions do not cease in the Republic. It is, however, not always possible to determine who could have been behind the death of one or another person.

In the evening of **March 2**, four unidentified individuals in camouflage and masks took **Magomed Albogachiev**, born 1960, away from his home in the village of *Ali-Yurt*. His body was

found in the morning with gunshot wounds in his head and chest. Before the change of the republican leadership he used to be the head of administration of the village of Ali-Yurt (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m163330.htm). He had no relatives that would have links to the militant underground, and, according to his colleagues, no real enemies either (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 5.3.2009).

On **April 3** at about 6.30 pm resident of the town of *Malgobek*, **Gapur Aboyevich Tankiev**, born 1985, residing at Bazorkina str., 56/4, was abducted (allegedly by security officers) from the intersection of the *Etusha* and *Bazorkina streets*, not far from the premises of the FSB Department for the *Malgobek district*. Unidentified individuals in black military uniform arriving in VAZ-2110 and Lada-Priora, seized Tankiev, shoved him into the car and took him away in an unknown direction. The eyewitnesses say that the third car, a Chevrolet-Niva, under the registration number of *c 962 om*, Region 6, was parked near Tankiev's house. The family believes that this was outdoor surveillance after Gapur. That car drove up to the spot where he was abducted at about 1:00 pm on **April 4**, and then attempted to drive off. Gapur's family followed it having informed the Malgobek district police department of what was happening. The Niva stopped in front of the migration service. The Tankievs and the police stopped near them. It turned out that the men inside the Niva were, according to their identification cards, FSB officers – **Alim Alikovich Bolov**, **Dmitry Andreyevich Andreyev** and **Alexander Yurievich Chenyavskiy**. According to Tankiev's family, two of them have been identified as having been among the men who abducted Gapur. The policemen took the FSB officers to the district police department, yet released them later declaring that they had not been implicated into the abduction. The Malgobek municipal branch of the Ingushetia Investigation Department of the Russian Public Prosecutor's office Investigative Committee are currently "conducting investigation" into the incident. On **April 6** Gapur's older brother, **Timur Tankiev**, appealed to the Memorial office in Nazran for help. He claims that Gapur was an exemplary citizen, working as a teacher at the secondary school No 20 in Malgobek and that the family had never been in trouble with law enforcement services. On **April 6** Yunus-Bek Yevkurov met with Tankiev's family and promised to take the investigation under his personal control (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163207.htm). Criminal proceedings under No 09540018 were initiated on the same day pursuant to Article 126 Part 2 Para 'a' of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ("abduction").

On **April 28** at 00:35 am in the village of *Orzhonikidzevskaya* in the *Sunzhensky district* unidentified individuals abducted **Ismail Ibragimovich Khamkhoyev**, born 1970, domiciled at Vygonnaya str, 21. On **May 4** his wife, Lida Khamkhoyeva, came to the Memorial office in Nazran. According to her words, shortly after midnight unidentified men knocked on their door and, speaking Ingush, ordered to open it. Ismail opened the door, allowing the armed men in masks and camouflage come in. They grabbed him, dragged him outside and took him away in an unknown direction. In the following morning Khamkhoyeva reported the disappearance to the Sunzhensky district police department. On **April 30** she was visited by officers of the Sunzhensky district branch of the Ingushetian Investigation department of the Russian Public Prosecutor's office Investigative Committee and informed her of that criminal proceedings have been initiated in connection with Khamkhoyev's abduction (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163690.htm). According to the data collected by the Memorial, on **May 7** Chechen police officers found Khamkhoyev's body in the vicinity of the village of *Bamut* (in the *Chechen Republic*). The body was dressed in camouflage uniform. After all due investigative procedures he was buried at a cemetery in the village of *Alkhan-Yurt* (*Chechnya*) as an unidentified militant. Later the body was returned to his family.

On **May 26** at about 4:00 am, resident of the town of *Malgobek* **Idris Maksharipovich Tsizdoyev**, born 1981, was abducted in his home town, presumably, by officers of the operational and investigative bureau of the Russian Ministry of Interior Main Department of the Southern Federal District. 12 armed men in masks and camouflage broke into the house of the Tsizdoyevs' family. Idris Tsizdoyev and his brother **Adam Tsizdoyev** were in the backyard of their house,

performing ritual ablutions in preparation to the morning prayer. Failing to give explanations or introduce themselves, the officers grabbed Idris and dragged him out of the yard. Adam could hear how Idris was being beaten, he could hear his screams, yet could do nothing to help him. Some ten minutes later the abductors drove off in a white Gazel vehicle taking Idris away with them. A pool of blood was left on the spot where he was being beaten. It was later discovered that the security officers had also gone into the neighbouring house No 14 belonging to **Magomed Tsizdoyev**. Holding two underage boys and their elder brother at gunpoint, they stole all golden jewelry, mobile phones and a *Vepr* sporting gun from the house. Adam Tsizdoyev immediately phoned the Malgobek district police department duty desk and reported the abduction of Idris, which information was further passed on to all police stations and posts. At the Mayak-12 post Ingush police officers stopped a white Gazel vehicle carrying Tsizdoyev's armed abductors. The abductors were detained at the post until police captain **Tsurov** arrived from the district police department. One of the officers in the Gazel vehicle, who, according to his identification card, was colonel of the Russian Ministry of Interior Main Department of the Southern Federal District **Adlan Alhmadov**, demanded to let his group pass since they had the task of taking the detained resident of Malgobek, Tsizdoyev, to *Magas*. Tsurov received a phone call from the Malgobek district police department duty desk and was ordered to let the ORB officers go. The Tsizdoyev family met with **Ruslan Meyriev**, the Minister of Interior of the Republic of Ingushetia and officer of the Ingushetia Security Council **B.Amkhadov**. Both reassured the family that they would do all that is in their power to clarify the fate of Idris Tsizdoyev and identify the persons implicated in his abduction. As of *the end of May 2009*, the whereabouts of Idris Tsizdoyev had not been established (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m164071.htm).

Many people in Ingushetia believe that Magomed Tsizdoyev had, too, been taken out into Chechnya, and placed in the ORB-2, an ill-famed detention centre, the name of which was linked to massive human rights violations and torture before 2007. It is also widely believed that ORB-2 officers were the ones who abducted Gapur Tankiev on April 3. It is said that Yunus-Bek Yevkurov had in his time raised before Russia's President **Dmitry Medvedev** the issue of inadmissibility of ORB-2 officers operating on the territory of Ingushetia, during the *June 9* session of the Security Council in Makhachkala attended by the heads of the Southern Federal District subjects. There is no evidence of that the petition had any results.

End of the counter-terrorist regime in Chechnya....

On *April 16, 2009* ex-officio Chairman of the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, FSB director **Alexander Bortnikov** announced the end of the counter-terrorist regime introduced in 1999 on the entire Chechen territory. Thus, a line was officially drawn under the non-declared war of ten years.

The lifting of the counter-terrorist regime was preceded by a brief, yet intensive propaganda campaign featuring the granting of the international status to the Grozny airport and the opening of the customs services at its premises in this connection. It was precisely this regime, which entailed restrictions on people's movements, control over the operation of the infrastructure facilities (i.e. including airports) etc; that was a serious obstacle on the way to achieving this goal. It was claimed that this unsolved problem was largely to blame for the high cost of large-scale construction and restoration operations, their pace and speed, as well as it had a negative impact on the moral and psychological condition of thousands of people, who, even when heading for the neighbouring countries, had to travel to other regions and take flights from there (*The Rossiya TV channel, 11.3.2009, Vremya Novostey, 1.4.2009*).

The current Russian legislation grants officials in charge of fighting terrorism an unacceptably wide range of power. The Federal Law on Combating Terrorism has the authority to introduce a counter-terrorist regime on any territory without any limitations. The territory on which

the regime of counter-terrorist operations is legally introduced, is determined by the commander of the operation, appointed by an unspecified official (this part is omitted by the law), accountable only to the director of the FSB, or the director of the FSB regional department. Unlike the emergency regime, no limitations are stipulated in the case of duration of the counter-terrorist regime, and no elected body is authorised to either lift or extend it. For all that, the restrictions on rights and freedoms provided for the case of the counter-terrorist regime are largely the same as under the emergency regime.

The goal of the campaign became clear in late March: on **March 25** Ramzan Kadyrov, relying, undoubtedly, on the “insider information” announced that on approximately **March 30-31** the anti-terrorist regime will be lifted in Chechnya. On March 27 the Russian President **Dmitry Medvedev** instructed the National Anti-Terrorism Committee to examine this issue at its session. At the March 31 meeting attended by the leaders of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, a non-committal equivocal conclusion was achieved concerning the necessity of “optimisation” of the counter-terrorist operations agenda in the North Caucasus, for which purpose it was necessary to “*involve the entire arsenal of means and forces that operational headquarters currently dispose of*” (*RIA Novosti*, 31.3.2009). In all probability, this extremely ambiguous wording suggested by Bortnikov, was an attempt to conceal the desire of the security services to postpone the resolution of this problem, although 3 days earlier, it was reported that during his meeting with the Russian President the FSB director “most decisively supported” the motion to lift the counter-terrorist regime (*RIA Novosti*, 27.3.2009). However, Ramzan Kadyrov once again came out the winner in his “partnership” with Moscow, having achieved his goal: on April 16, the anti-terrorist regime was lifted.

April 16 was declared to be a public holiday by Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya - festivities and concerts were held in Grozny. However, the lifting of the anti-terrorist regime hardly had a significant impact on life of average citizens. According to locals, on the day-to-day basis, this regime has long become sheer formality, many were even unaware of the fact that it was still in effect. Over the recent years the degree of involvement of the federal security structures in the counter-terrorism struggle in Chechnya was constantly decreasing. The troops deployed in the flatland areas rarely leave their bases and only operate in the highland part. Block posts have largely been removed. In the recent years there were increasingly fewer police officers arriving on assignments from other regions of Russia. The duties relating to combating the militant underground, as well as the license to unlawful violence within the framework of countering the threat, were transferred to the republican security forces, who operate completely ignoring the norms of the counter-terrorist regime - the Chechen Ministry of Interior, and the “Sever” and “Yug” battalions of the Russian Ministry of Interior Internal Troops. These battalions, staffed largely with those who were previously known as “kadyrovtsy”, are officially part of the federal security structures, but in actual practice, they subordinate only to the President of Chechnya.

After lifting the counter-terrorist regime, the burden and responsibility for combating the militant underground now lies fully with the republican Ministry of Interior. This is what Ramzan Kadyrov has been striving for so long – achieving complete non-interference of the federal forces in Chechnya’s internal affairs. It has been declared that the end of the counter-terrorist regime will entail the withdrawal of all the Ministry of Interior troops and other federal forces numbering up to 20,000 in total from the territory of Chechnya. The decision to disband the Main Intelligence Directorate’s special-purpose battalions *Vostok* and *Zapad* was confirmed, although after the announcement of their reorganization last November their existence was at any rate rather a pure formality (*Vremya Novostey*, 1.4.2009).

Currently, the 42nd Motor Rifle Division of the Ministry of Defence and the 46th Independent Special Task brigade are deployed in Chechnya on a permanent basis. The former unit is expecting restructuring which will divide it into two (or according to other sources, three) motor rifle brigades. If all the newly formed brigades of the Ministry of Defence remain stationed in

Chechnya, the total size of the federal troops (including the border guards) on the territory of the republic will be about 22,000-23,000 (*Vremya novostey*, 8.5.2009). According to the data provided by the Chechen government, the numbers will be far lower: one brigade of the Ministry of Defence (6,000) and one brigade of the Ministry of Interior Internal Troops (4,000 – 5,000 strong), of the total strength of 10,000-11,000 persons (*quoting the interview of deputy head of government of the Chechen Republic Z. Sabsabi, Ekho Moskvyy radio*, 17.4.2009). It is obvious that it is this size that the Chechen authorities advocate with the Kremlin, referring to the demographics as well as the social and economic factors of the problem: the federal troops are allegedly “*occupying large territories where farms, agricultural enterprises, schools, sanatoria are meant to be*” (*idem*).

Moreover, FSB border patrol detachments continue to be deployed in the highland parts of the neighbouring Georgia.

Considerable reshuffle is to be expected. The lifting of the counter-terrorist regime puts an end to the legitimate deployment of the operational headquarters of the United Force Grouping in the North Caucasus, since its operation may only be possible under the counter-terrorist regime. On **May 6**, it was announced that the headquarters would be disbanded by September 1, 2009. However, in its place a new structure called ‘The Regional Security Maintenance Committee’ will be created, which will in practice be an operational group of the Ministry of Defence, the Russian Ministry of Interior and FSB officers. It remains unclear for the moment what exactly its powers and goals would be. A source in law enforcement services quoted by the *ITAR-TASS* gave the following a rather vague description of their professional duties: “*The policy now will consist of sending experts into the republic, whose task will be to coordinate the work of, and assist the republic’s law enforcement structures*” (*ITAR-TASS*, 6.5.2009). The Chechen security services insist that there is no need for such assistance and are doing their best to refuse it.

No involvement of the remaining federal forces in Chechnya in the operations against the militant groups is envisaged. During the whole spring the Chechen authorities repeatedly asserted that they are capable of dealing with all their problems on their own and that the current operations were already held without the participation of “*a single officer or a single soldier*” (referring to officers and soldiers of the federal forces).

The Ministry of Interior personnel strength is estimated at 15,000-17,000 people (according to the estimates of Z. Sabsabi voiced in his interview to the Ekho Moskvyy radio – their number is about 10,000, 17.4.2009), including two road patrol service regiments, the republican special task forces, the non-departmental oil facilities security regiment (the so-called “oil regiment”). The spring 2009 news bulletin also contained a mention of the Chechen Ministry of Interior special task force regiment named after Akhmat-Hajji Kadyrov, although such a unit is not found on the official diagram of the structure of the Chechen Ministry of Interior given on its website (www.mvdchr.ru/page.php?r=7). This regiment, created in 2004, has rarely featured in the media recently, and its legal status remains unclear. Moreover, the two battalion of Interior Ministry’s troops – the *Sever* and the *Yug* battalions – are also under Ramzan Kadyrov’s command. No less than 7000 men currently serving among the Ministry of Interior personnel are former militants and only a few of them had in their time undergone the official amnesty procedure, which had been declared by the State Duma. The rest surrendered exclusively against the personal security? guarantees by Ramzan Kadyrov. . They are “*highly capable and well-trained fighters, and we are one million percent positive of their loyalty to the land of their fathers*”, -this is how Kadyrov describes them (*Vremya Novostey*, 23/3/2009)/

The end of the counter-terrorist regime will, most likely, significantly change the composition and the status of the republican public prosecutor’s personnel. The “combat bonuses”, in addition to the wages, have now been removed, which meant a serious reduction in the wage rate (for example, for the Ministry of Interior Internal troops the wages have decreased at least twice, *RIA Novosti*, 30.3.2009). This has resulted in the massive leaving by the officers from other regions of Russia working on an assignment in Chechnya, whereas before they were the ones who were

still ready to investigate criminal proceedings opened on the facts of violations of the law by the local security services over the recent years, torture, murder and abduction cases. The bulk of cases in this category have never received fair and effective investigation, yet a number of cases have been taken to court and received wide public attention. Prosecution officers from among local residents are much more reluctant to take up such cases.

“...And now another war, a war with no mercy...”

The events that occurred in Chechnya in spring 2009 were hardly affected by the formal lifting of the counter-terrorist regime: the militants continued their attacks on police officers and civilians. While the discussion on lifting the CTO (counter-terrorist operation) regime was taking place, came news about armed clashes between large (approximately 10 to 15 persons) groups of militants and casualties sustained by the security forces.

On **March 29**, an armed clash in the vicinity of the village of Akkinchu-Borzoi broke out between officers of the Ministry of Interior Internal Forces and a group of about 15 militants, during which two of whom were killed. It was also reported that firearms, cartridges, medication were seized on the site. The Russian federal forces sustained no casualties.

According to the *"Russian Newsweek"*, at the **end of March** a group of militants, 30-35 men strong, entered unhindered the settlement of *Neftyanka* not far from the *village of Dyshne-Vedeno*. They found and killed the village police superintendent and hoisted a black flag on the roof of the administration premises. In the morning, several young men left the village with the militants, among them was a nephew of the killed police superintendent (*Russian Newsweek*, 6.4.2009).

On the day of lifting of the counter-terrorist regime, **April 16**, an armed clash occurred between the security forces and a group of 10 militants in the vicinity of the village of *Dai* in the *Shatoi district* (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 18.4.2009).

On the eve of the clash and as an aftermath of the lifted counter-terrorist regime, caches with ammunition and weapons – hundreds of shells, dozens of kilogrammes of explosives – were discovered in Vedeno, Shatoi and Kurchaloi districts (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 20.4.2009).

On the day of lifting of the counter-terrorism regime funerals of a senior military officer, the commander of the elite *Vympel* detachment of the Russian FSB, who was killed by a mine blast in Chechnya two days earlier, were held in Moscow (*Radio Ekho Moskvy*, 18.4.2009).

During the month, following the lifting of the counter-terrorist regime, at least 6 armed clashes were registered on the territory of Chechnya. As a result of shelling, attacks and blasts, 10 servicemen and police officers were killed and 7 were wounded (these figures were obtained by way of summarising reports of media agencies as well as the information available to the Memorial staff).

On **May 2**, for the first time after a long lapse in hostilities, the village of *Benoi* in the *Vedeno* district came under a shelling attack. One man was wounded, one house was destroyed, two were damaged. The district superintendent explained the incident as a “mistake by the artillery troops” and prohibited the journalists to film the impact of the attack, saying that the media should focus on showing the positive news and events.

On **May 15**, in Grozny the first in recent years attack of a suicide bomber occurred: the suicide bomber blew himself up near the Ministry of Interior headquarters in the centre of Grozny. Four people were killed and five were wounded as a result. It should be noted that the suicide attacker in question was not a young man, contrary to the usual profile of a terrorist, , but the 40-year-old **Beslan Chagiev**, a man with a university degree, a professional sportsman in the past, the ex-champion of Europe in Greco-Roman wrestling

(www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163732.htm).

The total casualties of the local law enforcement and federal security forces over the spring 2009 (according to the VoineNet website www.voinenet.ru, which collects and summarises open data presented by Russian media agencies concerning the situation in the conflict zone in the North Caucasus) were 16 persons killed and 39 wounded (according to the same source, for the spring 2008 the respective figures were 20 killed and 21 wounded, while the winter 2008/2009 figures were 8 persons killed and 18 wounded, see the respective bulletins of the Memorial). As we can see, the casualties among the members of the security structures in Chechnya have gone up since the counter-terrorist regime was lifted.

The total casualties of the security services in the North Caucasus for the spring period were 59 persons killed and 97 wounded (the figures for last year's spring were 40 and 59 respectively).

As before, there is a stunning gap in the statistics presented by the republican authorities and that of the federal authorities. On *April 21*, Deputy Minister of Interior of the Chechen Republic, **Muslim Isayev**, announced that over the first three months of 2009 not a single terrorist attack, not a single extremism-related crime had been registered (*REGNUM press agency quoting the press service of the Chechen Ministry of Interior*). On the same day, a spokesman for the Operational Headquarters in the Chechen Republic, in charge of coordinating counter-terrorist operations of the federal security services in the republic, reported that since the beginning of 2009 16 armed attacks, 3 shelling attacks and 11 blasts had been registered in Chechnya, the casualty toll was 8 police officers and federal servicemen killed and 20 wounded (it is also obvious that these figures are underestimations).

Similar chaos and discrepancy are observed with regard to the estimates of the number of active militants in Chechnya.

According to the data presented by the President and the Ministry of Interior of the Chechen Republic, their number does not exceed 60-70 persons. These or similar figures have been given by the authorities over the recent years along with promises to do away with them within a few coming weeks. And yet, at the end of each year the Chechen Ministry of Interior presents a total toll of hundreds of militants killed or arrested.

The data provided by the federal authorities is, as usual, several times higher than the figures presented by the Chechen authorities.

The "*Russian Newsweek*" reports that on the eve of the lifting of the counter-terrorist regime the Main Intelligence Department of the Russian Ministry of Defence Headquarters gave an estimate of 55 militant groups uniting in total up to 750 persons, including sympathizers and the network of informers, operating on the territory of Chechnya. The *Vedeno* and the *Nozhai-Yurt* districts have largest militant groups operating in all of Chechnya. Up to 65 militants are operating in Grozny alone, according to the Main Intelligence Directorate reports (*Russian Newsweek*, 6.4.2009).

The press service of the Operation Headquarters in Chechnya gave the respective figure of 500 militants (*Kommersant*, 25.4.2009).

The President of Chechnya also spoke of 480 militants, referring to the data collected by certain "republican special services", however, he contradicted himself later on: referring to "his own sources", he said that the number of militants active in Chechnya was "around 50-70 but not more than 100" persons (*RIA Novosti*, 25.3.2009).

Speaking on *May 20* at the first plenary session of the Public Council under the Investigative Committee of Russia's Public Prosecutor's Office, Chairman of this Committee **Alexander Bastrykin**, gave his estimates of the total number of militants operating in the North Caucasus as 1,500 persons (*RIA Novosti*, 20.5.2009) – an almost unimaginable figure in the context of the recent

years. Similar figures were given back in 2000-2002, when the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya was still in full swing. Several hours after Bastrykin's declaration something almost inconceivable happened: the Investigative Committee asked RIA Novosti to "cancel" the report containing the declaration of its Head concerning the militants' numbers as "erroneous" (*Lenta.Ru*, 20.5.2009)! It is hard to find any other case in the history of modern Russia when a governmental agency would urgently repudiate official declarations of its own head. This would have required some extraordinary reason: either the declaration contained a grave mistake, or it was sheer and cruel truth...

One thing becomes clear from these contradictory figures: the victory over the armed underground is still a distant perspective, the federal security services are not all too enthusiastic about the lifting of the counter-terrorist regime under the urgent pressure for this by the Chechen authorities.

Shortly after April 20, the head of the republic's FSB department made a decision to re-impose the counter-terrorist regime on the territory of *Vedeno, Shatoi and Itum-Kala districts*, as well as the mountaineous part of *the Shali district*. On **April 27** the counter-terrorist regime was lifted in the *Shali district*, while remaining in effect in the other three. According to head of the Operational Headquarters press centre **Vladimir Patrin**, the grounds for re-introducing the counter-terrorist regime in these districts was escalation of the "*activity of members of illegal armed formations*" (*Kommersant*, 25.4.2009). These actions of the federal servicemen were met with immediate and harsh criticism by Ramzan Kadyrov: "*I am the chairman of the republic's anti-terrorist commission. And it is this commission that is called to be first and foremost in charge of the course of the counter-terrorist operation. We are keeping the situation in every district, in every settlement, under our control and we are convinced that there were no reasons to re-impose it [the counter-terrorist regime]*" (*Kommersant*, 25.4.2009). Meanwhile, Chechen Ombudsman, **Nurdi Nukhazhiev**, promised that, after having verified the information concerning the situation in the districts where the counter-terrorist regime was re-introduced, he would submit to the military prosecutor's office a complaint against the commanders of the Operational Headquarters, who have, in his opinion, exceeded their official powers (*Kommersant*, 25.4.2009).

The end of the spring was marked by a chapter of major terrorist attacks and launching of a new large-scale operation, which is yet another "final" and "conclusive" one – to use Kadyrov's own words. After the suicide bomber blew himself up in front of the Ministry of Interior building in the centre of Grozny, Ramzan Kadyrov suddenly announced the end of all negotiations with members of illegal armed formations, the suspension of the amnesty programme and the start of a truly uncompromising war on the militant underground.

Soon thereafter, came an announcement about launching of a special operation in the vast mountaineous woodland area on the border of Chechnya and Ingushetia – the territory of the *Achkhoi-Martan district* of Chechnya and the *Sunzhensky district* of Ingushetia. Estimates vary as to the number of militants active in this region, ranging between 25 and 50, under the command of **Doku Umarov**. They have recently become much more active and frequently make appearance in remote Ingush villages (*Arshty, Datttykh, Verkhny and Nizhny Alkun*) at night, terrorising the local population loyal to the republican authorities. Reports have been received, claiming that the militants recently have been actively recruiting local youths into their ranks: some are forced to "go into the woods", for some it is a matter of their own personal choice. The Memorial has information that in the Chechen village of Shalazhi alone 8 young men have recently "gone into the woods" (*see more detail below*). There have been reports of some Chechen police officers joining the militants in the woods (one was arrested in Chechnya at the end of May, the other was killed on the border of Chechnya and Ingushetia). All this was bound to be perceived as an important signal by the Chechen authorities.

The key characteristic of the new operation was coordination of the operations conducted by the Chechen and the Ingush security services at the presidential level. The joint operation was

announced on **May 17**, following the meeting of the two presidents in *Magas (Kavkazsky uzel, 17/5/2009)*. This was the first experience of such a joint operation. Before this, the relations between the Ingush and the Chechen law enforcement services used to be rather hostile, considering the excessive activities of the latter on the territory under the competence of the former. There have even been cases of bloody clashes between the security forces of the two republics on the border. The relations between Ramzan Kadyrov and the former President of Ingushetia, **Murat Zyazikov**, were not the friendliest. Kadyrov barely tried to disguise his contempt for the weak and unpopular Zyazikov; they rarely met, always restricting themselves to fulfilling the protocol requirements. Moreover, Kadyrov himself and his team did not hesitate to benefit from every opportunity to intervene into Ingushetia's internal affairs. The relations between Kadyrov and **Yevkurov** seemed to remind more a balanced partnership. They frequently meet in mosques to demonstrate the old-fashioned Vainakh solidarity which is almost forgotten now on the official level. The impression was that even on a personal level the two leaders feel closer to each other – at any rate, addressing each other in “brotherly” terms has been common between them.

However, the factor prompting the Chechen and the Ingush security services to start a joint operation was the lifting of the counter-terrorist regime in Chechnya, which put the republics' authorities face-to-face with the need to demonstrate before the federal centre their ability to fight the militant underground without assistance from the outside. The militants, quite naturally, ignore the official frontiers, both on the official and the ideological level: back in 2007, at the time of establishment of *the Caucasus Emirate*, Doku Umarov declared that he rejects *"the borders and the laws invented by the kafirs in order to sow separation among Muslims"*. Groups of militants are still less likely to take any heed of these borders while manoeuvring between Chechnya and Ingushetia and fully relying on poor coordination of operations between the law enforcement officers of the two republics. The latter, in their turn, since they were operating without any coordination, found it easier to force the militant groups into the neighbouring territory to avoid direct clashes with them. From this point of view, the operational coordination of the Chechen and Ingush security services, undoubtedly, is a very helpful step. Moreover, both Kadyrov and Yevkurov were present during special operations and personally interacted with the locals.

The forces participating in the joint operations include subdivisions of the special task battalion of the Russian Ministry of Interior Internal Forces named after Akhmat-Haji Kadyrov (this is the name that was given to the former battalion “Sever” (North) in early May, a special task police force regiment of the Chechen Ministry of Interior, which is also named after Akhmat-Hajji Kadyrov, and a regiment of the Extradepartmental Security Directorate of the republican Ministry of Interior (“the oil regiment”). Investigative work, combining reconnaissance of the area, setting up block points and laying ambushes on the roads, which militants are likely to use, are among the measures employed. The first results of the operation were announced on May 28 and were immediately declared to be “significant”: over less than a fortnight 12 militants had been killed – 5 in Chechnya and 7 in Ingushetia. Representatives of the security authorities of both republics have repeatedly stressed that the operation will be brought to the victorious end – a definitive and total crackdown on the militants. The hostilities are, therefore, likely to become rather protracted (*Kavkazsky uzel, 28.5.2009*).

A new wave of civilian abductions in Chechnya

The Chechen authorities have repeatedly declared that the lifting of the counter-terrorist regime would result in the firm rule of law and the end to the widespread use of the “extraordinary methods” to combat terrorist threats. Such “methods” include abduction of suspects, which has become a true disaster in the republic over the recent years. From the very start of the “counter-terrorism” operation in 1999, federal security services and the federal armed forces were usually

blamed for being behind the abductions. The responsibility of the Russian state for these crimes has on numerous occasions been proven at the European Court of Human Rights. However, as the process of ‘Chechenisation» of the conflict progressed and the republic’s law enforcement services were established, they gradually took over this practice. They began to adopt such methods as abduction, and not infrequently, murders of suspects, in their work, which made it difficult to expect any major changes in the situation once the counter-terrorism regime was lifted.

After a certain period of relative calm in early 2007, when practically no abductions of civilians by law enforcement officers had been registered, the number of abductions again began to increase sharply in the first months of 2009. The lifting of the counter-terrorist regime had no impact on this dynamic. There are reasons to believe that the number of young men who are now abducted as part of “the preventive operations”, which also involve some or other degree of violence, is quite significant (*see below*). However, upon their being returned home, the abductees absolutely refuse to discuss the matter even with their families, let alone, with the human rights activists.

Such “preventive actions” are nothing but counter-effective: young people who have been subjected to torture and humiliation, leave for “the woods” often immediately after their release. Thus, “the preventive measures”, in fact, are creating a favourable environment for further growth of the extremists’ ranks. An illustrative example of this is the situation in the village of *Shalazhi* in the *Achkhoi-Martan district*, where, according to the information obtained by “Memorial”, 8 persons have left their homes to join the militants over the past six months. It is also known that the majority of them had been detained and subjected to tortures shortly before that. Thus, on **May 7**, resident of the *village of Shalazhi*, **Anzor Bashayev**, left his home and joined the armed underground. Two days earlier he was detained by law enforcement officers and returned home severely beaten. Bashayev said that he had been taken in connection with Asmerzayev’s disappearance (*see: www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163736.htm*). The latter had been abducted by militants, according to his family’s account, while his co-villagers claim that it was his own decision to join them. By the look of it, Anzor joined the militants just as his cousins **Rizvan** and **Alkhazur Bashayevs** did earlier. Among those who have recently joined the militants in the woods are cousins **Adam** and **Islam Shakhbievs**, **Alvi Khmazayev** and **Baudi Akhtanov**. Some of them had been detained by the security forces shortly before (*www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163726.htm*).

In total, according to the official statistics, over the year of 2008, 80 local residents are known to have joined the militant groups (*RIA Novosti*, 24/3/2009). However, what is important here is not this ridiculously low figure in itself, (which does not prevent the authorities from claiming that hundreds of militants have been killed in the woods and hundreds still remain there), but the official recognition of the problem: young people are leaving their homes to join the militants.

Below we give a summarised (and most certainly incomplete – the reasons for this being quite obvious) list of abductions and unlawful arrests of Chechnya’s residents that have come to the knowledge of the “Memorial” staff during the spring 2009.

On **March 2**, in the village of *Assinovskaya* in the *Sunzhensky district*, officers of unidentified security structures abducted **Alvi Gelagayev**, born 1980. At **about 6:00** am armed men broke into the house of the Gelagayev family and took away Alvi Gelagayev without any explanations. With the help of the village head of administration **Nazarbek Terkhoyev**, Alvi was brought back home by the evening. Gelagayev told his family that after being taken out of the house, he had a knitted cap pulled over his eyes, his hands were handcuffed and he was laid on the bottom of the car. After the necessary checking, - presumably, at the military base in Khankala, - Alvi was taken to the nearest police department and later released (*www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m161956.htm*).

In **mid-March** it became known that in the village of *Dargo* in the *Vedeno district* in the

course of several weeks, dozens of local residents, primarily young men, had either been abducted or unlawfully arrested. The Memorial has published a list containing the names of 20 those men.. Our staff members have travelled to Dargo and spoken to the locals, who allege that officers of an unidentified security structure would regularly arrive in the village and take young men and even sometimes women away with them. The majority would return a few days later, all beaten up and thoroughly intimidated. Nobody would be willing to talk about the details of what had happened to them. A unit of the Akhmad Kadyrov Road Patrol Police Service Regiment has its base in the village. Its officers did not participate in the abductions, yet did nothing to stop the abductors (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m162910.htm).

After the Memorial office in Grozny filed an inquiry with the Republic's Public Prosecutor's Office, abductions of the Dargo residents stopped and several young men, who were believed missing, returned home. Among them was **Iles Maskiev**, whose story was reported by Memorial on March 31 (www.memo.ru/2009/03/31/3103092.htm).

On **March 18**, at about 10:00 am, in Grozny, officers of an unidentified security services abducted 17-year-old **Magomed Suleymanov**, resided at: *Staropromyslovsky district, the Gorodok Ivanova precinct, Shakhterov str; 98*. Those individuals introduced themselves as "the local administration officials" and took Magomed away for "interrogation" under the inquest into a compensation payments case. However, soon after that, his parents found him on the premises of the Staropromyslovsky district police department of Grozny, all beaten up and with traces of tortures on his body by electric current, which were registered by medical staff at a hospital. Magomed said that he had been subjected to cruel torture with his torturers demanding that he confess his involvement in a grocery shop robbery, and that he had signed his alleged "confession". Magomed's mother received threats in the form of a reminder that she still has two other sons. On **March 20**, the family's attorney **Dzhabrail Abubakarov** and Magomed's parents filed a petition with the Public Prosecutor's citing the fact of torture (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m162911.htm). On **April 6**, the police again came in search of Magomed Suleymanov, but that time he was not at home (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163214.htm).

In the village of *Yandi-Kotar* in the *Achkhoi-Martan district*, for two consecutive nights, officers of the security structures came to the houses of two local residents, cousins **Anzor** and **Kazbek Baydullayevs**, who had earlier already received a six-month imprisonment sentence each in connection with the **March 2008** attack on the village of *Alkhazurovo* (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2008/04/m129396.htm). Anzor and Kazbek were released in **October 2008**. On **March 21** at 5:00 am, **Kazbek Baydullayev**, born 1988, resided at: *Zarechnaya str., 35*, was abducted. Armed men broke into the house and took Kazbek away in an unknown direction without giving any explanations. On **March 24** the family learnt that the young man was being kept at the Achkhoi-Martan district police office. As he later told his mother, he had been beaten and tortured for three days in a row in an attempt to obtain false confessions from him. He was taken to the outskirts of the village of Yandi-Kotar, where he "showed" to the police a "cache" with weapons, which he in reality had nothing to do with. Kazbek is currently being kept at the Grozny temporary detention unit (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m163210.htm). On **March 22**, officers of the Achkhoi-Martan district police department broke into the house of **Alkhu Said-Alievich Baydullayev** (*Lugovaya str., 11*). The police officers came with intention to detain the son of the family, **Anzor Alkhayevich Baydullayev**, born 1986, who was at the time not at home. Anzor is visually-impaired, with the II group disability. Since mid-September 2009, Anzor had been receiving treatment at the Achkhoi-Martan district hospital. On March 21, when Kazbek was being taken away from his home by the district police officers, Anzor made the decision to go into hiding from law enforcement and not wait for possible arrest, unwilling to be again subjected to tortures and beatings (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m163216.htm).

This is not the only case where law enforcement services turn their attention to people who

have already become victims of abductions, torture and trumped-up criminal charges. Thus, on **April 19** at 11:30 pm in Grozny, armed men in masks and camouflage broke into the house of the **Lomayev** family (*Mayakovskogo str, 189, fl. 1*). The landlady, **Toita Lomayeva**, demanded that they identify themselves. They first told her that they were from the 6th department of the Chechen Ministry of Interior, yet later declared that they were “kadyrovtsy”. The unidentified individuals demanded from Lomayeva to sign a certain document the content of which was not shown to her. On the following day she was told at the Leninsky district police department that her night guests were trying to establish the whereabouts of her son **Musa Lomayev**, born 1981, wanted by the police (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163504.htm). Officers of the Leninsky district had already abducted Musa on **May 26, 2004** from the same house in Grozny. That time he was tortured on the police department premises and on the ORB-2 premises, forced to confess to have done things he had not. On **March 30, 2005** the Supreme Court of the Chechen Republic acquitted Lomayev on all charges and he was released, following which he fled from the republic fearing persecution and harassment (<http://search.memo.ru/show.pl?url=http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/N-Caucas/atmstr/G5.htm&words=%CB%EE%EC%E0%E5%E2>).

On the night of **April 17** in the village of *Ilyinovskaya* in the *Grozny (rural) district of the Chechen Republic*, two locals, **Mekhdi Umarov**, born 1991, domiciled at *Yubeleynaya str.*, and **Zaurbek Khiryayev**, born 1990, resided at *Nagornaya str., 7*, were abducted by officers of unidentified security services. The abducted men were subsequently “discovered” at the Vedeno district police department. On **April 22**, officers of the police department took a parcel for the detained (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163484.htm).

On the night of **April 22**, in the Oktyabrsky district of Grozny, five local residents – young men aged under 25 living in one neighbourhood – were abducted, presumably, by officers of the Special Rapid Response Detachment of the Chechen Ministry of Interior. The families were able to trace the abductors and knew that the latter were seen driving into the inner yard of the ORB-2 premises. The following morning they contacted the Chechen Ombudsman, **Nurdi Nukhazhiev**, and superintendent of ORB-2, **Isa Surguyev**. The latter said that he knew nothing of this abduction and promised to clarify the situation. At around midday on April 22, the young men were released. All had been subjected to severe beating. **Shamil Ibragimov** sustained the gravest injuries. According to the abducted men, they were beaten by a certain **Diki** – the commander of the Special Rapid Response Detachment based on the territory of ORB-2, who was forcing them to confess to involvement in the illegal armed groups or to report some information concerning the activities of the latter. The victims are determined not to seek justice or prosecution of their offenders fearing retaliation (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163506.htm).

On **April 29**, at about 3:00 pm in the village of *Noybere* in the *Gudermes district* of the *Chechen Republic*, officers of unidentified republican security structures abducted local resident **Aslan Gidalishev**, born 1976. They introduced themselves as officers of the *Leninsky district* police department of Grozny. However, later this department denied its involvement in Aslan’s arrest and the fact of him having been taken to their premises. Aslan returned home on the same day at about midnight. He had been severely beaten, his whole body was covered in bruises and hematomas. Aslan had been asked about his brother, **Akhmed Gidalishev**, born 1985, who left home a year ago in **April 2008**, and is believed to have joined the militant groups. After the incident, the Gidalishev family were declaring their readiness to cooperate with the security forces, but they were never trusted by the latter who suspected the Gidalishevs of secretly aiding their militant brother (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163706.htm).

On **May 4**, in the village of *Bamut* in the *Achkhoi-Martan district* of *Chechnya*, officers of the 7th squadron of the special task police regiment illegally detained 18-year-old **Rustam Merzhuyev** and his cousin, 17-year-old **Izaur Merzhuyev**, who were residing in a temporary accommodation centre. They were taken away without explanation of the reasons for detention and

without notifying the parents as to where their children were being taken. The detained spent the whole night in a cellar on the territory of the 7th squadron premises, where they were tortured with electric current, beaten with straps and were forced to confess their alleged membership in a militant group. In the presence of their attorney they were charged, pursuant to Article 208 Part 2 ("affiliation with members of IAF [Illegal Armed Formations]поспособничество членам НВФ") of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. In the evening, the Merzhuyev brothers were released after signing a pledge not to leave their place of residence. On **May 5**, the Grozny-inform website announced, quoting the Chechen Ministry of Interior, that several members of illegal armed groups had been identified (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163729.htm).

On **May 8**, at about 2:00 am in *the village of Gekhi in the Urus-Martan district of the Chechen Republic*, officers of unidentified security structures abducted local resident, **Umalat Zayrayev**, born 1988, resided at: *Pervomayskaya str., 31*. Pulling a sack over Umalat's head, the security officers shoved him into a white Gazelle vehicle and drove off without telling his wife where he was being taken to. On the night of **May 9**, Umalat returned home. According to his own account, he was delivered to the territory of the Special Police Task Force base in Grozny. Later he was transferred to the ORB-2 territory, to the premises of the Special branch under the command of a certain **Diki**, where he was kept until midnight. Umalat was beaten in both places of his detention. He said that he was interrogated in respect of two local residents, **Ibragim Bakaniev**, born 1988, and his cousin **Ibragim Movsarov**, born 1986, both of whom disappeared on the night of **April 30, 2009**

(www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163730.htm).

On **May 10**, at about midnight in *the village of Bachi-Yurt in the Kurchaloi district of the Chechen Republic*, officers of the republic's law enforcement services abducted four local residents: **Umar-Khadzhi Edisultanov**, **Rukman Khizriev**, 60-year-old **Ali Ibriev** and 53-year-old **Salamu Dzhabrailov** (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163713.htm). In the evening of **May 1,3** three of them – **Khizriev**, **Ibriev** and **Dzhabrailov** were released. However, on the following day, they were again arrested. **Edisultanov** was released in the evening of **May 14**. **Khizriev**, **Ibriev** and **Dzhabrailov** were again released on **May 15**. They declined to answer the questions of their family members, their physical condition was tolerable (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163719.htm).

On **May 18**, at about 11:00 pm in *the village of Kurchaloi*, the **Zakriev** brothers – 23-year-old **Dzhabrail** and 21-year-old **Dzhebir** – were abducted, presumably by officers of the territorial police department in *the village of Bachi-Yurt*. Late in the evening of **May 20**, **Dzhabrail** returned home. His physical condition was satisfactory. He refused to speak of either where he had been taken to or what was wanted of him. **Dzhebir** was left in custody. About six months ago he left his home and was absent for about a week. He did return home, yet it remains unknown where he had spent all that time. After this, **Dzhebir** became a member of the Yug battalion but soon afterwards he made a voluntary decision to leave it. In the recent time, the brothers were earning their living through domestic production of bricks (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163945.htm).

On **May 20**, at 4:30 am in *Grozny*, officers of an unidentified security structure abducted four persons from *House 7 on Zvezdnaya str. (Zavodskoy district, the Andreyevskaya Dolina residential precinct)*: **Nugzar Bagakashvili**, born 1972, the master of the household, **Sultan Machalikkashvili**, born 1972, **Ramzan Margoshvili**, born 1976, and **Ruslan Tkhadadze**, born 1970. They were all kinsmen and were guests staying with **Nugzar Bagakashvili**, to whose house **Ramzan Margoshvili** brought his fiancée. The security officers in masks and camouflage penetrated into the house while everybody was asleep. They raised the four men from their beds and took them away without explaining the reasons or the circumstances. The detained men were released on the same day at about 4.00 pm. They are not aware of where they had been all that time since they had plastic bags on their heads (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163944.htm).

On **May 25**, at about 3:00 am in the village of *Gekhi in the Urus-Martan district of Chechnya*, security officers abducted local resident, **Apti Shamsayev**, born 1990, resided at: *3rd per Budennogo, 10*. The security officers drove to the house of the Shamsayev family in three UAZ vehicles and a VAZ-2110 passenger car. They were wearing masks and camouflage and spoke Chechen and Russian. They did not introduce themselves and did not provide any explanations, simply grabbing Apti and dragging him away. Shamsayev's family submitted a written report to the Urus-Martan district police department, and on the following day – a report to the District Public Prosecutor's. On **June 3**, the Achkhoy-Martan inter-district investigation department of the Russian Public Prosecutor's Office's Investigative Committee Chechen Republic Division initiated criminal proceedings No 73025 pursuant to Article 126 Part 2 Para "a" of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation ("abduction by a group of person under preliminary conspiracy"; quoting the reply of the Chechen Republic Public prosecutor's Office to an inquiry from Memorial). As of **June 2009**, the whereabouts of Apti Shamsayev had not been established (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/05/m163955.htm).

As we can see, the majority of young people do return to their homes or are very soon found by their parents. While they remain "missing", the law enforcement services are conducting their "educational and preventive work" with them, which in practice means that they are tortured to make them confess to various crimes. Some of them spend months in custody.

Thus, on **March 8**, inhabitant of the village of *Oyskhara in the Gudermes district of Chechnya*, **Bilal Izrailov**, abducted from his home on **December 22, 2008**, returned home. According to his family's words, Bilal was probably kept at one of the republic's bases of the security forces located in the *village of Tsentoroi*. Izrailov was released on the eve of the celebrations on the occasion of Prophet Mohammed's birthday. The Izrailov family do not wish to talk about the abduction and subsequent disappearance that have taken place. On March 24, Izrailov was interrogated at the District Public Prosecutor's office. He denied that abduction had taken place at all (*quoting the reply from the Public Prosecutor's office of the Gudermes district to an inquiry from the Memorial*). His fellow villagers, who saw Bilal after his release, claim that he is in a fairly good physical condition (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/03/m162319.htm).

On **April 13**, resident of Gudermes, Salman Mutayev was returned home. Security officers dropped him right in front of his house. Mutayev was abducted by officers of an unidentified law enforcement service on **January 2 of 2009** in Gudermes (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/01/m159185.htm). According to his family, he was kept on the premises of the territorial police department in the village of *Bachi-Yurt* for a hundred days. Salman's condition was described as satisfactory (www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/msg/2009/04/m163326.htm).

In the vast majority of cases families of the abducted do not report disappearance to law enforcement services after their return and generally avoid recalling or speaking of the incident. Only the gravest cases normally get reported – when the person goes missing for a considerable period of time or is found dead. But even in such cases, law enforcement services do their best to avoid registration of such crimes, to investigate them with maximum negligence, or all in all to avoid investigating them.

This was the case, for example, with the abduction and murder of the three **Ilayev** brothers between **November 30** and **December 2, 2009** – **Akhdan, Alvi** and **Zurab**, the latter was an acting police officer. He was, posthumously, dismissed from the police ranks. All three were found dead and only after that they were declared to have been members of the illegal armed groups: the inquest incriminate the Ilayevs' participation in the armed clash with law enforcement services three days after they were abducted and killed (Memorial described their death and the trials and tribulations of their family at: www.memo.ru/2007/12/27/2712071.htm). The investigating authorities repeatedly refused to initiate criminal proceedings on the fact of murder of the Ilayev brothers. The re-opened criminal proceedings were repeatedly suspended. In **early March 2009**, they were re-opened on the basis of an order from Republic's Public Prosecutor, **Mikhail Savchin**

(www.memo.ru/2009/04/22/2204091.htm). However, as of early summer 2009, nobody had so far been put in charge of the investigation.

The Mysterious Case of Sulim Yamadayev

In spring 2009, the country was able to see new developments in the drama of the **Yamadayevs** clan.

As a reminder, the name of the Yamadayevs clan is linked to a series of grave crimes committed in Chechnya and outside of it in the past years. The complaints of the residents of the village of Borozdinovskaya, where the operations of the Vostok battalion resulted in burning down of houses, the death of one and the disappearance of 11 civilians, have been submitted to the European Court of Human Rights. The interests of the applicants are represented by the lawyers of the Human Rights Center Memorial and the SRJI.

On the other hand, the Yamadayevs and the Vostok battalion of the Ministry of Defence Main Intelligence Directorate, which was until recently under their command, remained the only force in the republic not accountable or subordinate to Chechnya's president Ramzan Kadyrov. The Vostok approved itself during the August 2008 Russo-Georgian war (www.memo.ru/2008/12/26/2612081.htm). On **September 24, 2008** an unidentified individual gunned down **Ruslan Yamadayev** – a Hero of Russia and a former Deputy of the State Duma, as well as the most influential one of the Yamadayevs' brothers. At about the same time, the leaders of the Chechen Republic finally succeeded in pressing the Kremlin to reorganize the Vostok battalion and suspend **Sulim Yamadayev** from the command. The criminal proceedings in respect of the latter, which had been suspended earlier, were resumed. It was reported that he was allegedly put on the federal wanted list (all this was described by Memorial in detail in its autumn 2008 bulletin (www.memo.ru/2008/12/26/2612081.htm)).

At that time, we believed that Ruslan's assassination was the climax and the resolution of the conflict, however, the subsequent events showed that this was not the end to the troubles of the surviving Yamadayevs brothers – **Isa, Musa, Selim** and **Badrudi**, the latter currently being on the run.

The fact that Sulim Yamadayev was on the federal wanted list, did not somehow prevent him from leaving the country for the United Arab Emirates.

On **March 28, 2009** news came from *Dubai* of an attempt on the life of **Sulim Yamadayev**. The incident took place at a car parking near the elite residential block where Yamadayev was staying. He received three shots in the back, while getting into a car. Two bodyguards accompanying him were of little help – they too were injured.

From the very beginning, the attempt was surrounded with a clout of mystery, the biggest of which – whether Sulim Yamadayev is actually dead or alive – remains unsolved to this day.

For a while there was no certainty at all that it was Sulim Yamadayev who was wounded. According to his brother Isa, Sulim had been living under close surveillance in the past months and he was forced to leave Moscow first for Dubai, and then moved to Africa. Upon his return to Dubai he avoided leaving his flat without urgent necessity and on the day of the attempt he was on his way to a local medical institution (*Vlast*, 13.4.2009). At first, the Dubai police announced that the murdered man had been identified as **Suleyman Madov**; however, later on, it was ascertained that the victim was indeed Yamadayev and the difference in the name given was due to the peculiarities of the Arabic spelling. On **March 30**, the death of Sulim Yamadayev was officially confirmed by the Russian Consulate in Dubai (*Kommersant*, 30.3.2009).

Isa Yamadayev, who promptly arrived in Dubai, from the very start admitted to the fact that

the attack had taken place, yet he absolutely denied that Sulim had been killed. He insisted on that his brother is alive and recovering in a Dubai's hospital. Sulim's wife, **Milana**, also claimed that she had seen him in a hospital ward and that he had regained consciousness (*Kommersant*, 1.4.2009). The entire family to date continues to stick to this version. On **May 29**, a certain friend of the Yamadayevs family, who gave his name as Alexey, declared that Sulim had already sufficiently recovered and was preparing to return to Moscow (*IA Interfax*, 29.5.2009). No mourning ceremonies were held in Gudermes, the Yamadayevs' family nest. By the end of April, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that it had not so far received any official clarifications in writing as to the fate of Sulim Yamadayev. This can also be regarded as a tacit confirmation of the fact that Sulim Yamadayev is still alive (*RIA Novosti*, 29.4.2009). Finally, in May Isa Yamadayev started talking with a greater degree of certainty about Sulim's health, which, according to him, was on the mend and he even promised a correspondent of one of the Russian newspapers to take a photograph of his brother with a fresh issue of their newspaper in his hands.

Whatever the true situation is, the Dubai police is most decidedly investigating a homicide. Fairly soon – after a certain period of chaos during which virtually all Russian tourists who happened to be in the vicinity of the scene of events at the time were arrested, - the names of the suspects were finally announced, provoking a wave of indignation on the part of the Chechen authorities. On **April 5**, the Chief of the Dubai police, General **Dhahi Khalfan Tamim**, gave the names of several persons suspected of involvement in the murder of Sulim Yamadayev, who were later declared internationally wanted by Interpol. Such include former vice-president of Chechnya and acting member of the Russian State Duma, Ramzan Kadyrov's cousin **Adam Delimkhanov**, as well as the brothers **Marvan**, **Tirpan**, and **Salman Kimayevs**, **Zelimkhan Mazayev**, **Ramzan Musiev**, **Elimpasha Khatsuyev** (the *interpol.int* website, 27.4.2009). Several arrests were made: one of those taken into custody was Tajikistan national Maksudzhon Ismatov. The key suspect in Sulim Yamadayev's assassination was named as Irani national Makhdi Lornia, who was also taken in custody. The whole point here is that Lornia (Larnia, according to other sources) is a personal groom of Ramzan Kadyrov's horses, who is in charge of keeping his Arabic-bred racers in the Dubai stables (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 7.4.2009). Other, almost fiction-like, details of the attempt also came to light. It was reported, for example, that Sulim Yamadayev was shot with a golden or a gilded Makarov pistol – special honorary weapon rather popular among Chechnya's ruling elite.

The heavy shadow of suspicion, which descended on Ramzan Kadyrov's entourage, compelled him to start a vehement exchange of accusation with the Dubai police and the West, where concern was growing over the recent series of assassinations of Chechen nationals outside Russia. Kadyrov categorically discarded any possibility of Adam Delimkhanov's involvement in the attempt on Yamadayev's life, saying that Delimkhanov is a "*a close comrade, friend, brother of his and is, moreover, his right-hand man*". In his turn, Kadyrov unexpectedly accused Sulim Yamadayev of involvement in the terrorist attack committed on **May 9, 2004** in Grozny which killed his father, then President of Chechnya, Akhmat Kadyrov. Over all these years, since Kadyrov Sr's death, Kadyrov never mentioned Yamadayev's implication in his father's murder, always claiming that all those behind this crime, primarily the guerilla leaders **Shamil Basayev** and **Khairulla**, had already been destroyed. Kadyrov's statement led to a confusion, the underplay of which remained outside of public view. On **April 16**, the Southern Federal District Main Investigative Directorate in the Southern Federal District issued a decree on re-initiation of the criminal proceedings in the case of Akhmad Kadyrov's assassination. However, three hours later this declaration was repudiated as it turned out that the re-initiation of the proceedings under the case was "groundless and premature" and became an initiative of one of the investigation officers who had somehow understood Kadyrov's words literally as an order to act upon (*Kommersant*, 17.4.2009).

As for Makhdi Lornia, he, according to Kadyrov, was at the races at the time when the crime was committed and was commenting them to his boss over the phone. This provides him with sufficient alibi, in Kadyrov's view, at least. Moreover, the latter expressed his indignation at the fact

that the expensive racers are now left unattended (*Vlast*, 13.4.2009).

Just as in the case of Ruslan Yamadayev's assassination, Kadyrov claims that Sulim had been tracked down by his blood feud adversaries, whom he would have plenty, considering his past.

Few people doubt that there is a clear connection between the assassinations of Ruslan Yamadayev and Sulim Yamadayev. The same persons may, in all probability, have been involved in the planning and preparation of these crimes. A proof of that could be the *April 7* arrest of **Elimpashi** (or, according to other sources, **Lom-Pashi**) **Khatsuyev**, born 1970, in Moscow on the charges of implication in the assassination of Ruslan Yamadayev (*Gazeta.Ru*, 17.4.2009). As said above, that very Khatsuyev was declared internationally wanted by Interpol in connection with Sulim Yamadayev's assassination. It was Khatsuyev who, according to the Russian investigative authorities, gave Ruslan Yamadayev's assassin a lift to the scene of the crime in a BMW-525 vehicle belonging to his common-law wife. He also picked him up after the attack. Khatsuyev is a former militant who was amnestied and settled down in Moscow a while ago. The suspected assassin of Ruslan Yamadayev was also arrested and was identified as **Aslanbek Dadayev**, a friend of Khatsuyev's.

Since the end of March – after Khatsuyev became a suspect in the eyes of the Russian law enforcement services, and during the period while the attempt on Sulim Yamadayev's life in Dubai was being planned and preparations were being made – Khatsuyev had been under covert surveillance and his telephone was tapped. It was precisely the tapping records that led the investigators to Dadayev. The people he was talking to used rather suspicious phrases in their conversation (*Kommersant*, 20.4.2009). This apparently marked a breakthrough in the investigation of Ruslan Yamadayev's assassination. Nevertheless, the investigation discarded the version of implication of former member of the Vostok battalion, **Aslan Diliyev**, in the crime, which it focused on at the initial stage (Diliyev was arrested in Moscow in December **2008** under a different criminal inquest, and his trial was opened on May **28, 2009**). It remains unknown whether the investigators are considering a possible link between Khatsuyev and Sulim Yamadayev's assassination.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the attempt on Sulim Yamadayev's life gives every reason to believe that it will soon come to a standstill. Adam Delimkhanov and the rest of the suspects have nothing to fear: it is Russia's policy not to extradite its nationals on criminal charges. The investigative authorities in Russia itself do not seem to be particularly interested in finding out the truth about the attempt on the life of a Hero of Russia and an acting Colonel of its Armed Forces. The only immediate and obvious consequence of this story may be the ruined hopes of the Chechen authorities to receive financial support from the Arabic countries: too many insults and open criticism have been addressed to the Dubai authorities by Chechen officials. The UAE authorities, who had granted Yamadayev permission to reside in their country, were openly accused of aiding a criminal. The Dubai police chief was accused of incompetence and criminal intentions with the purpose of "*helping the true murderers to escape justice*". Other accusations include "*act of sheer provocation*" and "*attempts to besmirch the good name of the Russian Federation and of the Chechen Republic*" (the *President and Government of the Chechen Republic* website, 16.4.2009).

Dagestan: the Gubden knot

In early 2009, the situation in Dagestan deteriorated significantly as the number of terrorist attacks and armed clashes with the armed underground drastically increased. According to the official statistics, voiced by the Republican Prosecutor **Igor Tkachev**, over the entire year 2008, 44 cases criminal proceedings were initiated in connection with terrorism-related crimes, the figure for the first 2 months of 2009 alone was as high as 17. Whereas for the entire 2008 year there were 100 registered attempts on the lives of law enforcement officers, the statistics for the first two months of

2009 was 19 attempts. In addition to this, the Prosecutor claimed that over the stated period 90 members and 102 supporters of illegal armed groups had been detained (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 2/4/2009)/

Based on the data collected in the reports of Russian press agencies, during the spring 2009, the Dagestani militants had killed 24 law enforcement officers and wounded 18 (the figures for the spring 2008 are 7 killed and 12 wounded, for last year's winter – 7 officers killed and 27 wounded, see the respective bulletins of "Memorial"). There is evident escalation of violence in the republic .

The heads of law enforcement services admit that the Dagestani militant underground is well-organised. However, when it comes to their numbers, the local authorities choose to employ Ramzan Kadyrov's method to estimate: the maximum number is given at 50–70 persons (the interview of late **Adilgirey Magomedtagirov**, Dagestan Minister of Interior, *Vremya Novostey*, 21.3.2009). On **April 12, Doku Umarov**, the amir of the Caucasus Emirate, appointed a certain **Al-Bara** to be the amir (commander-in-chief) of the "Dagestan Front", "*the divisions of which are currently operating in the Khasavyurt district of the Villayat Dagestan*" (*Jamaat Shariah*, 12.4.2009). Al-Bara had never been mentioned in the media and in Dagestan itself he is known under the name of **Umalat Magomedov**, an ethnic Kumyk (his ethnicity is not an important factor, however, as Salafism is relatively unpopular among Kumyks). The militants' websites also decline to comment on this "appointment". However, one of the publications of the *Kavkaz-Center* website claimed that Al-Bara is not a person but a religious community, a jamaat operating in the Khasavyurt district (*Kavkaz-Center*, 23.1.2009).

The Khasavyurt district remains one of the most troublesome parts of Dagestan, however, this spring the epicenters of violence were the *Sergokalinsky* and the *Karabudakhkensky districts*. The events in these two areas are having an increasing impact on the flatland areas, as Deputy Minister of Interior, **Magomed Gazimagomedov**, chose to put it. The best-known figure in the Dagestan militant underground is **Magomedali Vagabov**, a native of the village of *Gubden*, who "*practically coordinates and leads the operations of the Makhachkala and Buynaksk terrorist groups providing them with financial and material assistance, teaches young people methods of terrorist combat*" (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 25.3.2009). According to the Dagestan Ministry of Interior, "urban" militants commit terrorist attacks in *Makhachkala*, *Buynaksk* and *Kaspiysk* after which they go into hiding in the woodlands of the *Karabudakhkentsky* and *Sergokalinsky districts*. Until recently three groups of militants were known to be operating in these districts – the groups led by **Magomedali Vagabov**, **Abdulgafur Zakriev** ("**Amir Gafur**", the leader of the *Seyfullah* group) and the *Kuppa* group led by **Shamil Magomedov**.

In **March** the law enforcement services finally decided to cut "the Gubden knot", which was prompted by complaints from a number of its residents claiming that the local militants force them to provide them with food and killing those who refuse to do so. A number of civilian homicides have been committed over the recent years (*RIA Dagestan*, 8.4.2009). We do not know whether the authorities were in any way involved in appearance of these statements, yet they were immediately used by authorities as a pretext for conducting a "special complex preventive operation" (see below).

Gubden is a large settlement, home to 12,000 people, but the majority of its residents know each other.

The leader of the lobbying group was certain **Elena Georgievna Triftanidi** – the widow of Superintendent of the village police department **Abdulmalik Magomedov**, who was murdered in **2008**. She took the lead of a group comprised of family members of murdered police officers. Triftanidi demanded to close down the mosques frequented by Wahhabi followers. "*We have mosques attended by Wahhabis only. Why not close them down? I have repeatedly raised this issue: why are the parents and families of these bandits enjoying the same privileges as we are? Cannot their rights be restricted in some way? Of course, this can be done, but again nobody wants to deal with this. We are therefore not tackling the roots of all this*" (http://www.ndelo.ru/one_stat.php?id=570). Initially, the action group was comprised of about 50 persons, currently their numbers are

far lower.

Some experts note, however, that considering the local population as victims of targeted terror by the militants would be oversimplification of the situation. Many believe that conflicts portrayed as inter-ethnic(?) or inter-religious tensions, in fact, frequently are motivated by personal reasons, although the authorities also contribute to using some of such clashes in their interests, presenting them as acts of terror. The term “terror” normally refers to systematic violence targeting a specific social group, whereas it is not the case here.

The sides to the conflict were therefore defined.

The militants admit to having committed murders of Gubden civilians, however, as the *Jamaat Shariah* website (a highly popular – considering the number of over 2 mln visitors in the two years, resource that belongs to “the Dagestan Front of the Caucasus Emirate”) put it – they are only after “*the authorities’ informants and traitors*” (*Jamaat Shariah*, 24.3.2009).

The authorities also are aware of the internal tensions in the community: some of the locals are tired of the militants’ harassment and choose to actively cooperate with the law enforcement services, others sympathise with the militants, support them and take up their jihad. Amazing as it is, but after long years of violent struggle with “Wahhabism” and with “non-traditional” religious lifestyles and beliefs in Dagestan, which may potentially also harbour any other form of dissent, Deputy Minister of Interior of Dagestan, **Abdurakhman Magomedov** finds that in *the Karabudakhkent district*, merely some 40–60 km away from Makhachkala, “*there are not a single issue, out of the entire possible range of problems, that we are not facing here today*” (*RIA Dagestan*, 8.4.2009). The most popular illustration of that, usually cited in support of this claim, is the hundreds of children in the district that have not attended school for years, because their parents would not let them to do so due to religious beliefs: in Gubden alone such children number at least 34.

Yet, the reality is far more complicated. There is only one school in Gubden, populated by 12,000 people. Many of those who refuse to let their children attend school claim that the quality of education there does not meet the needs of today’s youth. However, they also object to physical education classes in school curriculum (according to Islamic norms, girls should not wear tight sports uniform), as well as they object to singing (Islam considers any music in people’s life, except nasheeds, undesirable) and biology classes (which include Darwin’s theory of evolution). They insist on separate education for boys and girls. Nobody has bothered to work on and offer a compromise solution, yet since the authorities started working on the issues, many children returned into the school: 33 children, who had skipped several school years, were enrolled into a consultative school. The general situation with school non-attendance was described by Elena Trifanidi as follows: “*...It is the children of ordinary citizens that are returning into schools, while the children of the authorities continue to be excluded from the mandatory educational activities*”.

On **March 18, 2009** in response to a petition of the Gubden population, a special complex preventive operation regime was introduced in the entire district providing for both publicity and educational measures as well as for military operations, however, not envisaging restrictions of movement in respect of the local population, which would have inevitably entailed disruptions in the planned agricultural work and operations. This regime is not provided for by the Russian legislation, being instead a local invention, the result of “creative” adaptation of the rigorous counter-terrorist operation regime to the extremely acute social situation in Dagestan. Everybody still has clear memories of the counter-terrorist operation in the village of *Gimry*, which effectively disrupted the entire economic life in the *Untsukul’sky district*.

The framework of this special complex preventive operation included setting up check points on the entrance roads to the villages of the Karabudakhkent’sky as well as Sergokalinsky districts, introducing the regime of compulsory document checking and car search. On the eve of imposition of the “special regime”, *Gubden* and the neighbouring village of *Gurbuki*, were visited by the Dagestan Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. They spoke to the local population,

attempting to convince them of the urgency of such an operation. The people offered the authorities representatives a rather cold welcome, showering them with most uncomfortable questions. Seeking to genuinely involve the local population in the struggle with the militants, Minister of Interior, Adilgerey Magomedagirov, suggested to return to the practice of 1999 – organising joint patrols of the surroundings by the police and the local inhabitants who would be given firearms for the time while they are patrolling. Perfectly realizing what they should expect after the police forces leave, the locals did not initially show much enthusiasm at the suggestion of organising a resistance movement (*Svobodnaya Respublika*, 20.3.2009). According to the accounts of the police officers, people in the area are very much afraid and distrustful of them, reluctant to cooperate and even refused at first to sell them food (*Svobodnaya Respublika*, 27.3.2009).

Armed clashes were, however, inevitable. Real battles broke out in the vicinities of the village of *Kaka-Shura* over the period from **March 18 to 22**, during which one of the local groups under the command of **Abdygapur Zakaryayev**, was killed. The combat was fought using artillery, armoured vehicles and air forces. The militants managed to repulse one assault of the special task forces and shoot down one helicopter, fatally wounding the sniper in it. FSB spokesmen officially confirmed the death of 12 militants, including Zakaryayev himself, and of 5 law enforcement officers. Another 3 officers were injured (*Interfax*, 23.3.2009). The militants confirmed the death of their “amir” Abdugafur Zakaryayev (*Kavkaz-Center*, 22.3.2009, the *Jamaat Shariah website*, 4.5.2009). A summer camp of the militants was discovered in the area of the battle. It consisted of five equipped spaces – four sleeping spaces and one used as a kind of mobile kitchen. It was made of cut tree branches and covered with a sheet of black plastic. According to the security forces’ accounts, the bandit group had a decent arsenal of arms (including two machine-guns), was well stocked with foodstuffs, and means of personal hygiene etc (*Novoye delo*, 27.3.2009). In total, according to the Dagestan Ministry of Interior, the recent operations in the Karabudakhkent district resulted in 18 militants killed, 12 among whom had been recruited in the city of Tyumen (initially there were reports of three foreigners among them), while the rest were locals (*RIA Dagestan*, 1.4.2009). However, even after that crackdown, the number of militants remaining in the woods, surrounding Gubden, is estimated by the Dagestan Ministry of Interior as some 35–45 men, among those there are 5 residents of Gubden (*RIA Dagestan*, 1.4.2009).

The Ministry of Interior estimated **Vagabov**’s group as 14 active militants strong after the crackdown on Zakaryayev’s group. Over the period since 2008, according to the police ministry information, Vagabov’s group had committed 24 terrorism-related crimes, resulting in human casualties: 9 police officers had been killed and 19 wounded, there were also casualties among the civilian population with 3 persons killed and 5 wounded (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 25.3.2009).

It should be noted that many of those who choose to join the militants in Dagestan are fairly well-to-do successful people. Zakaryayev himself, a middle-aged man (born 1963), used to be a successful businessman who owned an enterprise in Krasnodar and had business partners in Italy and Spain. According to the story on the militants’ website, having decided “to join the jihad” back in 2006, Zakaryayev sold everything and broke up with all of his old friends (*Jamaat Shariah*, 4.5.2009). Meanwhile, in Khasavyurt in **April 2009**, the court received the case of ex-director of the city market No 2 **Marid Tatayev**, who had been evading taxes, channeling the funds thus released (an amount of 7 mln rubles) towards establishment of an armed underground group of his own and its needs. He continued to live a perfectly open life remaining in his position. At least one attack of his group on a police officer in **December 2008** was proven to have had Tatayev among the immediate participants (*Kavkazsky uzel*, 1.4.2009).

Such businessmen, well-off and successful people, who apparently have good leadership skills, easily win support of young people (four of the identified members of Zakaryayev’s group were aged between 21 and 24). Two of Zakaryayev’s militants were recruited (“initiated into the holy jihad”) shortly before – one or two weeks before, the other – a week before the attack (*the Jamaat Shariah website*, 4.5.2009). According to the *Novoye delo* newspaper, they left home in early March this year and one of them, **Rustam Mukiev**, left a note to his parents saying that he

was “*taking up the jihad*” (*Novoye delo*, 27.3.2009). The authorities admit that the young people leaving “for the woods” (most often those located in the neighbourhood of their village) are primarily those who “*are not studying or have no jobs*” (*RIA Dagestan*, 1.4.2009).

In the recent months the republican and the district authorities (in the districts where Salafism has most supporters) began to voice conciliatory opinions in respect of followers of non-traditional Islam in Dagestan – the Salafis, who are persistently referred to as Wahhabis in the North Caucasus. Thus, the Dagestan Minister of Interior claimed that the authorities will tolerate any interpretation of Islam so long as it is not spread “*with arms in hands*”. Conciliatory undertones have become to appear in their declarations: “*We know that there are young people among them who have not committed anything criminal yet and who have no blood on their hands. With the help of their parents, the police will do all they can to make them leave the woods and return to normal life*” (*RIA Dagestan*, 8.4.2009). The authorities seem to have begun to realise that the protest moods are frequently the driving force behind the inflow of new members to the Salafi militant groups, while the latter may become a real danger profiting from such support. These latest declarations of the authorities are more than welcome, provided they will be brought into practical life. They would be the evidence of the first steps on the part of the authorities on the path to civil peace in the republic (this was voiced by the Memorial staff at a press conference dedicated to the situation in Dagestan in November 2008 (www.memo.ru/2008/11/25/2511082.html)).