

PRESS RELEASE

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European Court to hear first Chechen human rights cases

The European Court of Human Rights has announced that it will hold an oral hearing in Strasbourg in the first six cases brought against Russia arising out of the situation in Chechnya, on 23 September 2004¹. The applicants are alleging various violations of the European Convention on Human Rights, including the right to life, the prohibition of torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, and the right to an effective remedy. The applicants in all six cases are represented by lawyers at the Russian human rights organisation, *Memorial*², together with lawyers from the London-based European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC)³.

Two cases concern allegations of torture and extra-judicial execution following the death of five of the applicants' relatives in Grozny at the end of January 2000. The bodies of the applicants' relatives were found with numerous gunshot wounds and the applicants allege that they were tortured and killed by the Russian armed forces.

Three of the applications arise out of the indiscriminate bombing of civilians leaving Grozny in October 1999. As a result of the bombing, the first applicant was wounded and her two children and daughter-in-law were killed, the second applicant was wounded and the third applicant's car containing her family's possessions was destroyed.

The sixth application concerns allegations of indiscriminate bombing of the village of Katyr-Yurt on 4 February 2000. As a result of the bombing, the applicant's son and her three nieces were killed.

¹ Khashiyev v Russia (no. 57942/00), Akayeva v Russia (no. 57945/00), Isayeva v Russia (no. 57947/00), Yusupova v Russia (no. 57948/00), Bazayeva v Russia (no. 57949/00), Isayeva v Russia (no. 57950/00).

² Memorial is one of the foremost human rights organisations in the Russian Federation, devoted to investigating and publicising human rights abuses. See www.memo.ru

³ Based at London Metropolitan University, EHRAC provides expert advice and assistance to NGOs and lawyers in Russia in bringing international human rights cases. EHRAC is funded by the European Commission and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. See www.londonmet.ac.uk/ehrac