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For immediate release

Strasbourg to rule on torture and killing of Chechen peace activist

On Thursday 21 June 2007 the European Court of Human Rights will rule on the cases of two Chechen women. Zura Bitiyeva complained to Strasbourg of having been tortured whilst in detention in 2000. She was later shot dead in her home in 2003. Her daughter, X, then applied to the Court about her mother's killing and was herself harassed by the authorities.

Zura was an active political figure in Chechnya and participated in anti-war protests. On 25 January 2000, men in military uniforms ordered Zura and her son, Idris, to the local police department for a passport check. From there they were transferred to the Chernokozovo detention facility.

The guards at Chernokozovo told Zura that she would not leave alive. On many occasions she was pushed and hit with rifle butts. She was held in unhygienic and cramped conditions. Zura witnessed other detainees being beaten and sometimes heard her son's screams when he was beaten outside her cell.

Zura was denied medical attention for existing medical conditions and became very ill. After 24 days of detention, on the intervention of the prison doctor, she was transferred to a hospital where she needed intensive care. In February 2000 she was cleared of all charges.

On 25 April 2000, Zura lodged an application to the European Court complaining that her treatment in Chernokozovo amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment and torture (Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights).

In the early morning of 21 May 2003 a group of armed men entered Zura's house. Zura, her husband, and Idris and were all shot dead.

Zura's daughter, X, took up her mother's application to Strasbourg. With the assistance of the Russian non-governmental organisation, *Memorial*, and the London-based European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) she complained of a violation of the right to life (Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights) on account of the killing of her relatives.

Following her application to the Court, X and members of her family were harassed and intimidated by the authorities, and X eventually sought asylum abroad.

The Court declared the cases admissible on 20 October 2005. More detailed information about the case can be found on EHRAC's website at:

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/hrsj/ehrac/ehrac-litigation/case-summaries/chechnya/bitiyeva-and-x-v-russia.cfm>