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**For immediate release**

### **European Court to rule on “disappearance” of former Chairman of the ‘Chechnya Parliament’**

On 5 July 2007, the European Court of Human Rights will rule on a case about the disappearance of Ruslan Alikhadzhiyev. From 1997–1999 Mr Alikhadzhiyev was Chairman of the Parliament of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. When he “disappeared” he was aged 38 and married with four children.

According to his family, at 11.15am on 17 May 2000, Ruslan and other members of the family were at home when several armoured personnel carriers (APCs) of the Russian armed forces arrived. About 20 armed men in camouflage surrounded the house and two helicopters flew overhead. The men entered the house and ordered everyone to lie face down on the floor. They handcuffed Ruslan and forced him into an APC.

Five neighbours were also detained that day. They state that they, and Ruslan, were all taken away in APCs. They were blindfolded and a black bag was placed on Ruslan’s head. They were driven for one to two hours before being ordered to get out. Still blindfolded they were led to an underground room where each was hit on the head with an iron rod. Three of the men, not including Ruslan, were questioned by masked servicemen.

After questioning they were taken to another cellar. Ruslan was not with them. The next morning they were again blindfolded, driven for about an hour, and then left at the roadside some distance from their homes.

The family have not heard from Ruslan since then. On 25 May 2000, General-Lieutenant Manilov, first deputy to the Chief of Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, announced at a press-conference that Ruslan Alikhadzhiyev had been detained on 20 May 2000. However, the family have made numerous attempts to search for Ruslan and have applied to various official bodies for information to no avail. A criminal investigation into his “disappearance” was adjourned due to a failure to identify those responsible.

In March 2001 Ruslan’s mother, Zura Alikhadzhiyeva, complained to the European Court under Article 2 of the European Convention (the right to life) in relation to her son’s disappearance. She also complained under Article 3 (prevention of torture) as there are grounds to believe that Ruslan was subjected to torture. On 8 December 2005 the case was declared admissible.

Mrs Alikhadzhiyeva is represented by the London-based European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) and the Russian NGO, Memorial. More detailed information and the admissibility decision can be found at:

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