

M. Matti Vanhanen
Prime Minister of Finland
EU Presidency

Brussels, 20 November 2006
Ref: b597

Dear Mr Vanhanen,

Subject: EU-Russia summit-concerns on human rights violations in the Russian Federation.

In the light of the upcoming EU-Russia Summit, Amnesty International would like to draw your attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in the Russian Federation. Amnesty International already expressed concerns before the human rights consultations with Russia that took place earlier this month and appreciates the effort made by the Finnish presidency to convey these concerns.

However, Amnesty International hopes that you may use your meeting with President Putin to reiterate some of its concerns. In our report published today, "Russian Federation: Torture and forced "concessions" in detention" (Annex 1), Amnesty International documents that Russia is failing both its international and national obligations to protect its citizens. Indeed, as a state party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Russia should fulfil its obligations under international law. However, despite a new Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) now in force which includes a prohibition on torture and other cruel and degrading treatment, torture continues. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the practice of torture of individuals held *incommunicado* in unofficial and unacknowledged places of detention in Russia's North Caucasus region. Investigations leading to prosecutions of such allegations of torture are almost non-existent which has created a climate of impunity in the region.

Amnesty International's report also highlights that the ongoing climate of impunity is linked to the lack of effective investigation in cases where detainees claim to have been subjected to ill-treatment or torture. The Procuracy is also responsible for the investigation and prosecution of serious crime. It should therefore be investigating its own people which seems unlikely. In recent rulings, the European Court of Human Rights has pointed to serious deficiencies in the Procuracy's response to allegations of torture.

Amnesty International regrets that the visit in October 2006 to the Republic of Chechnya of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture did not take place and was cancelled at the last minute by the Russian authorities.

Amnesty International asks you to call upon President Putin to:

- sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and facilitate the visit to the Republic of Chechnya of the UN Special Rapporteur on torture as soon as possible;
- respect Russia's obligations under international human rights treaties to protect the rights of those in detention to be free from torture or other ill-treatment, including by ensuring access to a legal counsel at all stages of the criminal investigation, access to a doctor of their choice, for relatives to be notified of the detention, and for detainees to be brought promptly before a judge; and
- develop standards for the Office of the General Prosecutor for ensuring that investigations are independent, effective, thorough, prompt and in line with international obligations, and ensure prosecutors are trained in how to investigate allegations of torture.

Please find attached a copy of the report for your information and reference. On behalf of Amnesty international I look forward to hearing from you with regard to your discussions on this subject with the Russian authorities.

Yours sincerely



Dick Oosting
Director Amnesty International EU Office



Frank Johansson
Director Amnesty International Finland

CC: Mr Solana, Mr Barroso, Mrs Ferrero-Waldner.

Annex: Russian Federation Torture and forced "confessions" in detention, AI Index: EUR 46/056/2006