



ECCHR BACKGROUND PAPER

The criminal complaint against Ramzan Kadyrov on charges of torture

On 13 June 2008, Austrian lawyers on behalf of ECCHR filed a complaint against the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov on charges of torture and attempted duress. Seven months later, on 13 January 2009, the chief witness, Umar Israilov, was shot dead in the streets of Vienna. In a final report released by the Austrian State Offices of Domestic Security and Counter-Terrorism, Ramzan Kadyrov is named of inciting the murder. Israilov, considered as persecuted political refugee in Austria since summer 2007, had previously served as a chief witness in an application before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). This application concerned, among other crimes, cases of torture that Israilov himself had suffered in Chechnya.

Prior to his murder, Israilov had reported that he had been illegally detained in Chechnya's Camp Tsentoroi from April to July 2003 and tortured repeatedly by President Kadyrov himself. A medical examination in Austria, undertaken in connection with Israilov's asylum procedure, confirmed that Israilov's scars and injuries fit descriptions of ill-treatment in his testimony. Moreover, during his captivity at Tsentoroi and his forced labour for the Chechen security service that followed, Israilov witnessed numerous accounts of systematic torture and unlawful executions conducted by Kadyrov and his forces.

The criminal complaint filed by ECCHR contained detailed testimony from Israilov regarding the human rights abuses committed by Kadyrov and his subordinates, the so-called "Kadyrovtsy". These forces are known to be involved in arbitrary detentions, kidnapping, blackmailing, harassing family members, torture and unlawful executions. The complaint also contained several other reliable governmental and non-governmental sources that supported Israilov's testimony.

Ramzan Kadyrov was also believed to have attempted grievous duress. In 2008, a Chechen man contacted Israilov and threatened him to withdraw his complaint before the ECtHR and tried to compel him to return to Chechnya. The man claimed to have been sent by Kadyrov. The threats were directed against Israilov and his family. The seriousness of these threats was never doubted. It is mentioned in past reports by independent human rights organizations that the disappearance of family members and endangerment of lawyers is not unusual in Chechnya.

In the complaint, ECCHR concluded that in light of the accusations leveled against President Kadyrov, and given Austria's obligations under the UN Convention Against Torture, the Public Prosecutor must issue a warrant for the arrest of President Kadyrov during his expected visit to Austria.