

Human Rights Crisis in Chechnya to be investigated by OSCE

Civil Rights Defenders and RFSL welcome the invocation of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism to finally address impunity for serious human rights violations and abuses in Chechnya.

The decision to invoke the OSCE Moscow Mechanism was announced on 1 November by 16 OSCE participating states, including Sweden. This means that an appointed fact-finding mission will examine the allegations of grave human rights violations and produce a report with recommendations to the OSCE Permanent Council.

In their statement, 16 member states (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States) expressed concerns *“centered around allegations of impunity for reported human rights violations and abuses in Chechnya from January 2017 to the present, including, but not limited to, violations and abuses against persons based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity, as well as against human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media, civil society organizations, and others. Among the reported human rights violations and abuses were: allegations of harassment and persecution; arbitrary or unlawful arrests or detentions; torture; enforced disappearances; and extrajudicial executions.”*

“A united international community has waited a long time for this process to demand that Russia finally deals with impunity in the region”, says Anders L. Pettersson, Executive Director at Civil Rights Defenders.

“The invocation of the mechanism and international pressure that it creates represent an important step towards achieving justice for the victims of anti-LGBT purges in and outside of Chechnya, says Sandra Ehne, RFSL’s President.

The republic of Chechnya is a totalitarian enclave in Russia, where serious human rights violations take place. One and a half year ago, reports about mass detentions, torture, and even murders of LGBT people Chechnya shocked the world. Since then, the Russian LGBT Network has managed to evacuate over 130 LGBT people from the region, most of whom have found sanctuary outside of Russia. However, Chechen authorities have continued their campaign to target homosexual, bisexual, and transgender men and women in Chechnya, and to crack down on human rights defenders who investigate and expose grave human rights violations,

The shocking reports about anti-gay purges were not met with adequate responses from the Russian authorities. To date, Russia has ignored numerous calls, recommendations, and resolutions by the [United Nations](#), [OSCE](#), [Council of Europe](#), and [European Union](#) institutions, heads of states and high-ranking politicians around the world. The Investigative Committee of the North Caucasus Federal District has refused to initiate criminal proceedings five times during the pre-investigation of the claims made by [Maxim Lapunov](#), the only victim of anti-gay purges who has dared to testify to date.

Civil Rights Defenders and RFSL express their solidarity with the Russian human rights defenders addressing impunity in Chechnya and are looking forward to the conclusions of the OSCE report, which will come as a result of the fact-finding mission appointed within the frame of the Moscow Mechanism.