THE FIRST INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE ABOUT EVENTS IN THE CAUCASUS

WORD DOSH DIGEST

"MUJAHID" FROM SOBR BEAT MURAD WITH PARTICULAR CRUELTY

ISSN 1818-5851

ISSUE #20

Editorial office in Moscow
RF, 103982, Moscow,
per. Luchnikov 4, entr. 3, room 1.
Tel. (495) 621-04-24
Tel./fax (495) 625-06-63
E-mail: doshdu@hotmail.com

Editor in chief
Israpil SHOVKHALOV
E-mail: shovkhalov@gmail.com

Executive Editor
Abdulla DUDUEV
E-mail: aduduev@gmail.com

Department Offices
HISTORY/HUMAN RIGHTS/SOCIETY/CULTURE
Mairbek VATCHAGAEV, Maria KATYSHEVA,
Naima NEFLYASHEVA, Ekaterina SELEZNEVA,
Lidiya MIKHALCHENKO, Ali MURADOV,
Amina MAGOMEDOVA

Correspondents
Taus SERGANOVA (Chechnya)
Marem YALKHAROEVA (Ingushetia)
Mussa MEISIGOV (Ingushetia)
Aida GADZHIEVA (Dagestan)
Ali MAGOMEDOV (Dagestan)
Nadezhda BOTASHEVA
(Karachayevo-Cherkessia)

Assistant Editor
Georgiy ZINGER

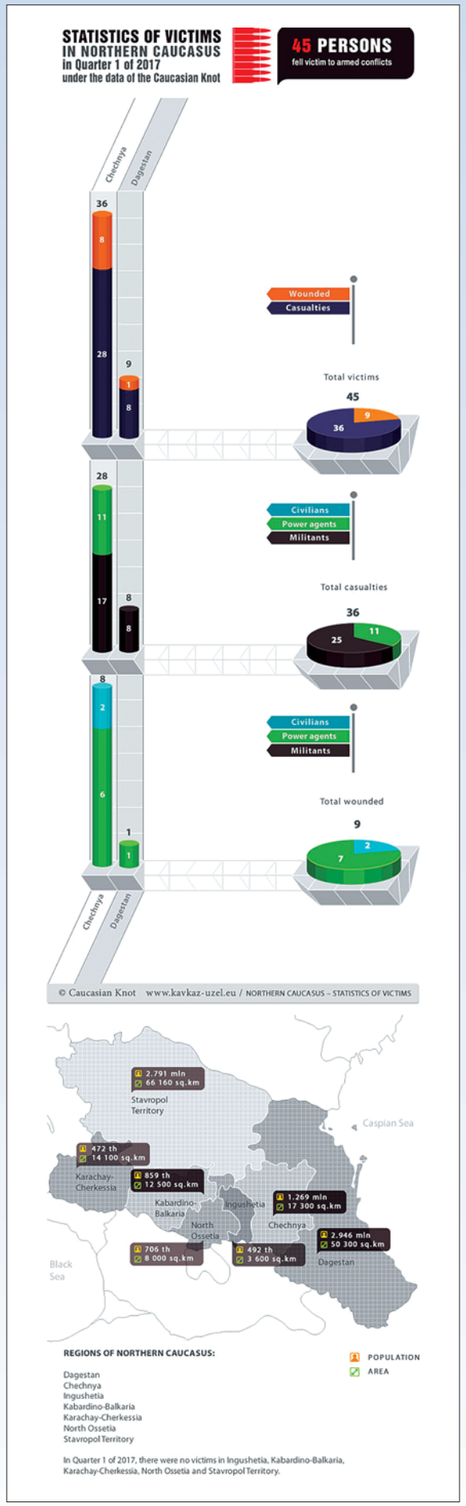
Literary editor of Russian texts
Irina VASUTCHENKO

English translation by
Boris SMIRNOV
Gregory Burnside

Design and layout
Dmitry YAKOVLEV

This publication has been published since
2003 and is registered with the
Federal Service for Supervision
in the Sphere of Telecom, Information
Technologies and Mass Communications (Roskomnadzor).
The certificate of re-registration is:
PI No. FS77-46140,
dated August 11, 2011.
Founders and publishers:
Members of the Russian human
rights research center:
Civil Society and Freedom of Speech Initiative Center
for the Caucasus;
The non-profit organization Right to Life
and Civil Dignity

The magazine is distributed
in Russia, Georgia
Azerbaijan, Armenia, Lithuania,
Norway, Germany
Austria, the Czech Republic,
France, Belgium, Great Britain
Circulation of the Russian edition - 10.000;
English edition - 1.000.



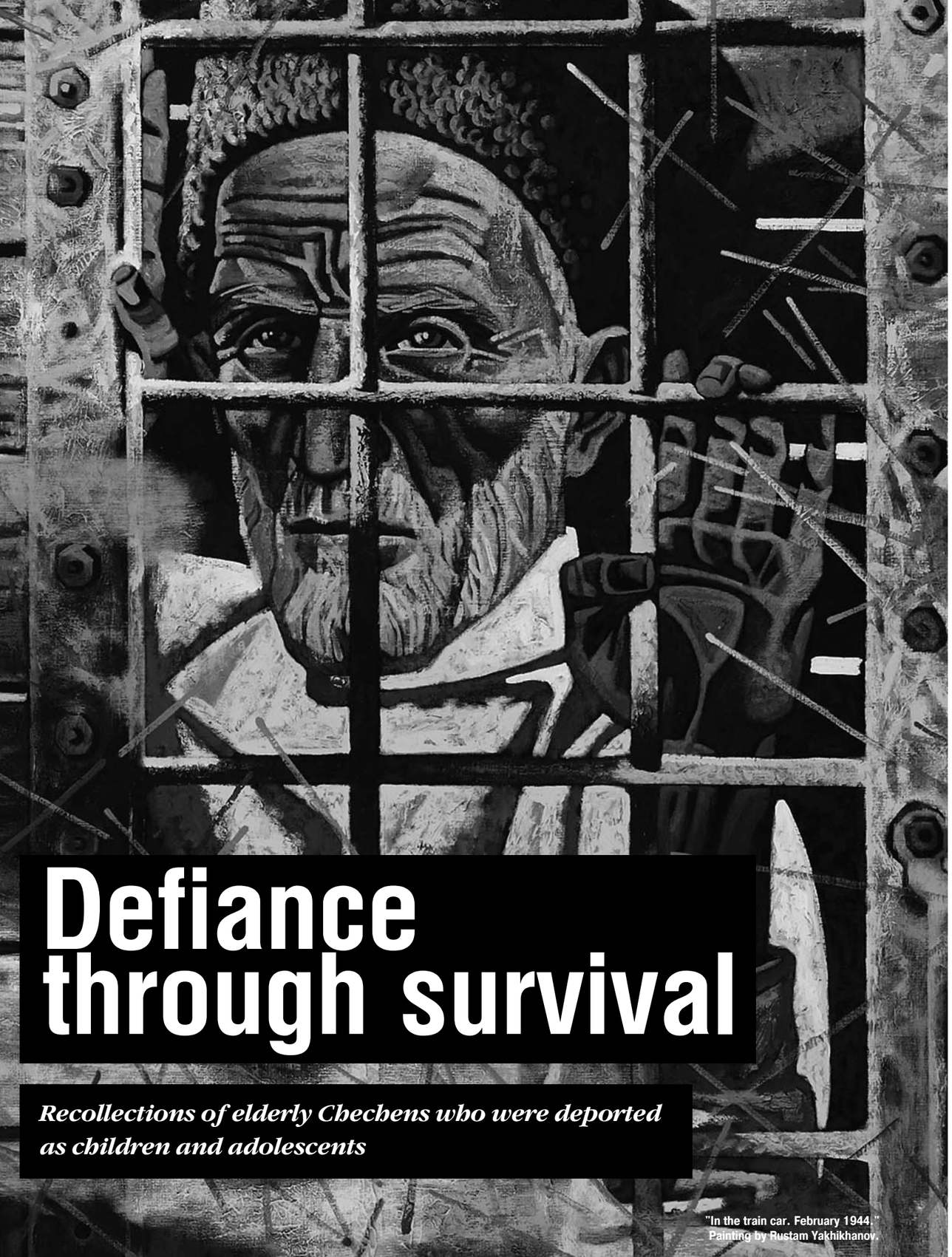
WORLD DOSH
THE FIRST INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE
ABOUT EVENTS IN THE CAUCASUS

DIGEST #20 2017

Defiance through survival
FEBRUARY 23, 1944 — FEBRUARY 23, 2017

20

Belarus is in an ambiguous position. It cannot openly admit that human rights in Russia are being violated to the point that Russia's own citizens are becoming refugees - after all Belarus and Russia are allies. Besides, such an admission is fraught with the threat of a Russian response - Russia might begin to discuss the state of human rights in Belarus. And as we all understand, that is a sensitive topic. Chechens point out that they do not feel safe in Belarus either, in part due to the Chechen agents among them. Minsk, nevertheless, does not wish to exacerbate tensions on the border. Therefore, Belarusian law enforcement has tried to handle the refugees carefully.



Defiance through survival

Recollections of elderly Chechens who were deported as children and adolescents

"In the train car. February 1944." Painting by Rustam Yakhikhanov.

"IT FELT LIKE THE JOURNEY WOULD NEVER END..."

Abdul-Azim Magomedovich Bakhayev was born in Zakan-Yurt in 1931. The Bakhayev family was still living in the village when the Chechen deportations began. It was a large family: the father, Makhmad; the mother, Sayallag; three brothers, Abu-Said, Mokhmad-Emin and Abdul-Azim himself; and two sisters, Aznat and Ayman. Yet besides Abdul-Azim, there is no one left to tell their tale of hardship. He is the only one still alive.

"Prior to the deportation announcement," Mr. Bakhayev recounts, "a lot of soldiers appeared in Zakan-Yurt. They were not kind to the local residents. When the time came for nighttime prayers, we could hear automatic fire. The soldiers did this to terrorize the peaceful civilians. They also gathered the able-bodied men and had them dig trenches. Then, one snowy morning, they led us from our houses to the street and ordered us to head to the station. It was located three kilometers from our village. Given such short notice, we could only grab what we could: corn flour, some unmilled corn and clothes. Most carried these supplies by hand, though the few that had carts used them. The soldiers had told the older men, 'Take what you like.' But this seemed more like humiliation than kindness. What can an old man who can barely walk take with him? We slept in the train cars. I remember it snowed heavily that night. In the morning the train set off. I didn't know what illness the people in the cars were suffering from, but not a single day would go by without some body being tossed out into the snow. They didn't allow us to bury anyone. The corpses fell into the snow and lay there like dolls that had never been alive to begin with. We were give food every other day. Sometimes they'd forget to feed us entirely. One hundred grams of rye bread, soup and boiling water if we were lucky. No one understood what was going in or what we had done to be punished like this. They took everything from us: our homes, our honor and our dignity. The men in the car finally decided to make a hole in the floor for sanitation. Boys of my age were not troubled by going to the bathroom whenever we felt like it, but what was it like for the girls, the women and the grown men? So many of them died! We were traveling for two weeks. It felt like the journey would never end.

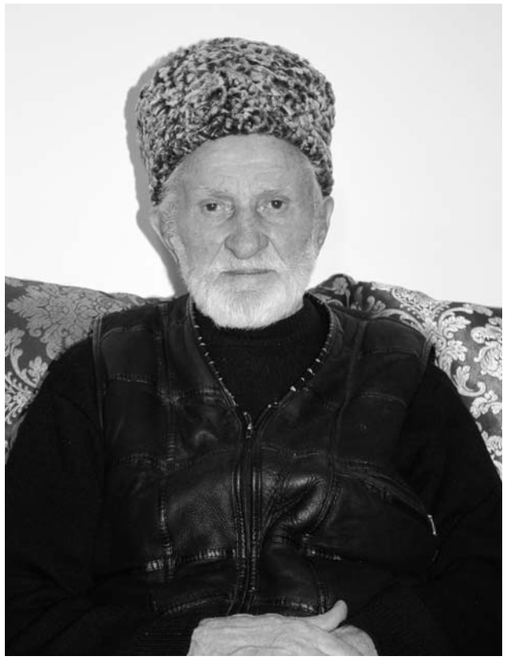
"They took us to the Telman sovkhoz (state farm) which was located in Osakarov District of Kazakhstan's Karaganda Region. No one wanted to have anything to do with us. The local residents barely got by as it was. We were quartered in a barracks, although it was really little more than a barn: a corridor and an empty room. No bed, no table, no chairs. We made our beds from hay and covered ourselves with the covers we had brought. That's how we lived. I don't remember the exact date, but after a while my father began to work. He was assigned to gather firewood. They didn't pay him money, simply several kilograms of flour once a week. None of us went to school. In the spring all the children were called up to the kolkhoz (collective farm) brigades to help with the spring sowing. We slept at the farm, on bunk beds of hay. I was 13 year old and I harrowed the tilled earth by hand. There was no machinery to speak of. You had to do everything yourself. The brigade leader didn't care if you were sick or exhausted. So many years have gone by and everything had receded into the past, but to this day tears well up in my eyes when I remember it all. Death followed closely on our heels. Aznat and Mokhmad-Emin did not live long. My father died in 1951. In 1949, I married Marem. We had seven children, three of whom died.

"On January 1, 1960, we returned home to Zakan-Yurt. My brother, Abu-Said, had come back a year earlier with his family. In 1964, we bought these temporary houses in Stavropolsky District and we have been living here ever since."

"I´D LIKE TO HOPE THAT AT LEAST MY GRANDCHILDREN WILL GROW UP UNDER A PEACEFUL SKY..."

Zhabrail Zhabalovich Bitiyev was born on April 13, 1937, in the Melnikov township of Grozny.

When misfortune knocked on the door of the Bitiyevs' house, his mother, Albika, was raising five children without a husband: Bikata (b. 1933), Alpata (b. 1936), Aset (b. 1938), Mokhmad (b. 1940) and Zhabrail. He has difficulty speaking of what happened, and he admits that he has forgotten much. The past is tattered and fragmented in his mind:



"What can I say about the deportation? That we were treated savagely? That our roofs, relatives and loved ones were taken from us? I can say one thing: 'May Allah preserve anyone from having to go through that!' I was only seven years old. A train stood waiting near the township of Artemovsky Elevator. We were told that we were being relocated on the orders of the chief. The reason they gave for all this savagery was that the Chechens had supposedly turned traitors and helped the fascist invaders. Despite this, the conditions were relatively tranquil. I remember that we, the children, were even excited to ride in a train. We were young, dumb. I didn't observe any aggression from the soldiers. They loaded us into the train cars. There were no toilets in the cars. The adults were very upset by this fact.

"We didn't experience any hunger as such. We were fed with soup and rye bread without fail. Our journey lasted about 13—14 days until we reached the village of Zhanatalap in Ile District of Almaty Region. We lived there about six years. I completed seven years of classes in a Kazakhstani school. The fact that I didn't know the language wasn't the main problem. What was worse was that the school was seven kilometers from my house. Every day, I walked this distance on foot, there and back. Now I can imagine all the things that could have happened along the way, but back then we didn't notice such difficulties. We were used to them.

"After graduating, I began to work in the same Region. I harvested timber, felling and transporting it. If I was lucky, I would have a team of horses to transport the fallen timber and I would use cows if I wasn't. The timber was taken to a sawmill. At that age, which is widely considered as the happiest time of life, the Chechen children were occupied in backbreaking labor so that they could help their loved ones survive. Anyone who wanted to eat had to work.

"And yet, our time in exile was not as difficult as it was for other Chechens. Everyone in our family survived. We had work and we had something to eat. Our homesickness broke our hearts. As soon as the announcement came that we could return home, we were among the first to go. We bought a house in Staropromyslovskiy District and have lived here ever since. I changed jobs several times, but even now I'm not sitting idly. I married Ayshat Bitiyeva and we have four children named Ramzan, Sharkan, Layla and Khizir. My children have borne me grandchildren, and now I bear the esteemed title of grandfather to six grandchildren. My children witnessed the wars. I'd like to hope that at least my grandchildren will grow up under a peaceful sky."

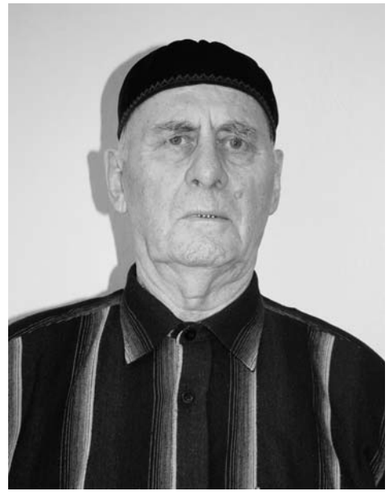
"PEOPLE SLEPT IN THE STREETS, COVERING THEMSELVES WITH CORN HUSKS..."

Yusup Aliyevich Malsagov was born on June 15, 1937, in the village of Achkhoy-Martan. This is what he relates about the deportation:

"When this monstrous crime was committed against the Chechen people, our family was living in the village of Achkhoy-Kotar. Presently, the village is basically uninhabited, but it was different back then. Our father, Ali Malsagov, who was 48 back then, wasn't with us at the time. He had been drafted into the labor army. Our mother, Khapsat (b. 1909) was alone at home with four children: my elder brother Abbaz (b. 1935), my sister Zaybulla (b.1939), one-year-old Vakhid and I. My mother had already lost two boys: One had died in 1943 at the age of three and the other was born during our deportation and did not survive.

"I was about seven years old then. One of my childhood memories is of my father's cousin, Dziyaudin Gabisovich Malsagov. I remember how he would arrive from Grozny to Achkhoy-Kotar in order to take us swimming in the river. Shortly before the deportation, he had acquired a car and we would ride in it with him. From 1931 to 1937, he worked as a prosecutor, investigator and judge in the People's Court of the Kurchaloyevsky and Shalinksy Districts. In 1937, he became first deputy of the People's Commissar of Justice for the Chechen-Ingush ASSR. He warned everyone he could about the forthcoming deportation, but people didn't believe him. It seemed so absurd! Why would they deport us? The Chechen people had worked hard for the conquest, defense and entrenchment of Soviet power.

"They knocked at around four in the morning. As I mentioned, only my mother and her small children were at home. We were ordered to gather our belongings. We took a small suitcase which was large enough to fit everything we had since we had so little. My older brother Abbaz wanted to take a small penknife, but the soldier, seeing it, confiscated it and threw it away. We were escorted to the central square of Achkhoy-Martan and spent the rest of the day there. They were supposed to take us to the station from there, but there weren't any available cars and we had to wait for them to arrive from Grozny. After lunch, it began to snow and sleet. Large snowflakes were falling and melting instantly. The cars arrived only at dawn the next day. People slept in the street, covering themselves with corn husks.



"Out of the enormous crowd of soldiers watching us, only a single tall, gaunt lieutenant took pity on the freezing, lightly-dressed children. He led us over to the exhaust of a car and said, 'Warm yourselves!' We didn't understand what he was talking about, but we knew to warm ourselves. Early next morning, we were loaded into American cars and taken to Grozny. The train was waiting for us there. I instantly realized that it wasn't a passenger train. My relatives and neighbors were all loaded into one car. The car was empty, without light, without a bathroom. There was nothing but two shelves running its length. During the journey, the men in the car produced an axe. No doubt someone had managed to sneak it in with them. They hacked a hole in the floor, thereby creating some semblance of a toilet. Then they screened that area with covers and sheets, separating the women from the men. That's how we began our journey — in utter darkness. I remember people talking about how a girl had died in the neighboring car from a ruptured bladder. Our guards didn't let us bury the dead. The corpses were tossed right into the snow. At times, during the stops, they gave us food. Someone had to go with a pail to pick up the soup and flour. Once they gave us camel meat to eat. It was the first time I tasted it. It was a difficult journey and the unknown awaited us at its end.

"The train reached Pavlodar Region, stopping at Sherbakty station. There were sleighs harnessed to oxen waiting for us. People and possessions were loaded on these and taken along a bumpy,

snow-swept road to the village of Emelyanovka, which was about 25 kilometers from the station. When we arrived, we were issued rations of 8 kilograms of corn flour per person. They had settled us in the home of a woman whose name I no longer remember. That first night in a foreign land, our mother cooked us corn porridge. We didn't have spoons so we ate it using the blade of a small knife, sharing it among ourselves. A month or so later we moved to a different place with three other families. And three months later, our father found us. To do so, he had to walk 13 kilometers on foot with our other relatives. He brought a sack of corn flour with him.

"My younger brother, Vakhid, died from typhoid fever. As I already mentioned, three families lived in one room. My father, mother, my sister Zaybulla and brother Vakhid, while he was alive, slept in one bed. Abbaz and I slept on a small wooden table. Initially, my father gathered millet and traded clothes for grain. My mother milled it into flour and baked cakes. I would give my cake to my father in the morning, when he would head out to gather grain for us. One morning, I woke up to find husks among the millet: The mice had reached our stores. I cried bitterly then.

"A year later, they began to draft anyone capable of working to work on the kolkhoz. My father herded livestock at the farm. The children went to school. My older brother and I took turns going, since we only had one pair of shoes. And after school, I would run to the fields to gather spikelets left over from the harvested grain. To do so, I'd make sure to sit in the front row of the classroom and listen carefully so that at the end of the lesson, when the teacher asked if anyone wanted to answer his questions the next day, I could answer then and there.

"As soon as the teacher left the classroom, I'd dash off to the fields. My mother would meet me there. When we went home, my mother would carry me on her back because I'd be tired. The fields were guarded and the guards would forbid us from even taking those spikelets. Our women came up with a ruse in which they would dress themselves in men's clothing, which would scare the guards from approaching, and thereby gather the spikelets in peace. These were the difficulties we faced during our first few years. After that, things became easier: They began to pay us with bread for our labor, we bought a cow and planted a vegetable garden. The garden was half a hectare and I looked after it. I completed four classes in our village and to go on studying had to travel to the neighboring village which was located thirteen kilometers from our house. I spent a year studying there. After that our class was transferred to an even more remote school. They assigned us a room so that we could spend the night there.

"I completed the tenth grade in 1956. I really wanted to enter the military academy — I really wanted to be a soldier — but everywhere I applied I was told that there weren't any vacancies. But the real reason for being rejected was something else entirely — I found that out later. That same year I went to Almaty to apply to the Mining Institute. My uncle Dziyaudin was living there at the time. And Almaty was where I saw the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev. Dziyaudin wanted to hand him a 17-page report about the genocide of the Chechen people in Khaybakh, Malkhesty and other villages. My uncle had been present at the burning of Khaybakh. He and another Russian captain tried to stop that inhuman act. But what could two people do? The soldiers disarmed them and wanted to shoot them. Twice, Dziyaudin attempted to meet with Khrushchev, but the security detail refused to let him pass. The third time, having waited for a moment when the guard was distracted, he burst into Khrushchev's office. The guards tried to throw him out, but Khrushchev stopped them. He read the report carefully and asked my uncle: 'Do you understand that you shall be held responsible if the events stated here aren't accurate?' To which Dziyaudin replied, 'You should ask Chairman of the KGB Serov and MVD Minister Kruglov about these events.'

"As it happened, the commission to investigate the Khaybakh massacre was convened right after that meeting. Earlier, my uncle had written a letter to Stalin, assuming that the 'Leader of the Peoples' did not know about those criminal acts. That letter resulted in a personal order from Lavrentiy Beria to liquidate Dziyaudin Malsagov. And yet thanks to the respect that Dziyaudin had earned among his superiors, he managed to escape this fate: They sent him to work as a procurer in a regional store until the danger passed and the issue was forgotten. Later, in Almaty, he was already working as an attorney.

"I passed my entrance exams but my competitors could pay much more than I could, so in the end I didn't make it. After a while, I returned home. During that time period, I had worked as an assistant drill operator as well as a cotton picker. Later we moved to Sherbakty where I completed trucker school. I began to work as a driver at a grain terminal. After that, life became easier and we had enough food to eat. In 1960, I was drafted into the army. I served in Irkutsk with the railroad troops. They were building the Sayansk road and I transported the completed railroad rails which were as long as 39 meters and helped the others put them in place. Later in 1965, I read that that railroad had been completed by the Soviet youth. That wasn't true though — the railroad had been built by convicts and by us. We had laid the rails with our own hands.

"After serving two-and-a-half years, I submitted a request for permission to enter a university. In 1963, I returned to Grozny and was admitted to the Oil Institute. I continued to work as a driver during my studies. In 1967 I married Amanta. We had four children: Marem, Ruslan, Zulikhan and Rizaudin. Now we also have nine grandchildren. During that period of my life, I worked as a police officer and detective. Currently I'm a lawyer, a member of the Chamber of Lawyers of the Chechen Republic. In 2009, I was awarded the Second Order Medal 'For the defense of the rights and liberties of citizens."

FEBRUARY 23, 1944 — FEBRUARY 23, 2017

"FORCED TO SURVIVE INSTEAD OF LIVING..."

Abubakar Dadayev was born in 1929 in the village of Kalkhadoy of Itum-Kalinsky District. Abubakar's father, Bay-Ali Dadayev, and the latter's uncle and cousin, Razhap Ashakhanov and Betsi (the cousin's last name is unfortunately forgotten) were disappeared by the authorities back in 1937.

Azane Dadayeva raised her six children without a husband. At the time of the deportation it so happened that Azane was not at home. She was away in the village of Alkhazurovo visiting with her oldest daughter Nasikhat and her husband. The five children awaited their mother's return in Kalkhadoy: Kesirat, Abubakar, Shakhid, Rashid, and Zareat. Abubakar can no longer recall the age of his now-deceased brothers and sisters. Out of all the children, only Abubakar and Kesirat survived. She is two years older than her brother.

The soldiers would frequently show up in that mountainous region, so no one thought anything of their appearance. However, strange things began to happen not long before the fateful day. The soldiers began to terrorize the inhabitants. Gunshots were heard frequently. And there were a little too many soldiers: About two soldiers for each household in the village. They refused to answer the puzzled villagers' questions.

On the cold dawn of February 23, 1944 — the day of the Peasant-Worker Red Army of the USSR — the soldiers deployed to Kalkhadoy began to pound on the doors of houses within which slept unsuspecting children. Abubakar remembers that the man who entered was not a Russian but a Kazakh or Uzbek. The children hastily grabbed what they could: Kesirat grabbed pillows and bed covers, Abubakar some corn flour, Shakhid a little meat. "We lived on the edge of a precipice," recounts Mr. Dadayev. "The snow covered everything around us: the houses and the road. It was very difficult to walk, sinking into the snow. The soldier took my youngest sister, Zareat, by the hand. She was too little to walk on her own. We were at an utter loss. We were terrified of the unknown."

Listening to him, I tried to imagine what was taking place in the hearts of this little chicks, who'd so suddenly been cast out of their nest. After all, they had already lost their father. Now as it happened, their mother was gone too. What terror, what confusion must have filled their chests...

"The soldiers herded all the people down to the village of Gamkhoy. We spent the night in the mosque down there. The next morning they drove us further, to Itum-Kali, and from there they began to transport us to the station in Grozny in these large American cars. They loaded us on a freight train and sent us on our way. Where? Why? What was happening? There were a few people who knew that under orders from the 'Leader of the Peoples,' Stalin, we ('the traitors') were to be resettled in Central Asia, in Kazakhstan. But we were children and we didn't even know the meaning of these words. We couldn't even fathom the word 'foreigner.'

"Our journey lasted sixteen days. Along the way, the guards fed us with pieces of rye bread and water, to ensure that the majority would survive. They took us to Southern Kazakhstan. We ended up in Tol Bi District of South Kazakhstan Region. I remember they had coal mines down there. The Kazakhs were not happy to see us, and to be fair, I don't blame them. They lived in hunger and poverty themselves. Their homes had no floors, only bare earth, and they would sit right on it, without any coverings. And they slept the same way.

"Our mother found us in the spring. She managed to find us, traveling all the way from Kostanay District without any papers! That was the happiest day, even though by that point, Kesirat and I were laid up in the hospital. I got better after three days, but my sister remained ill for almost a month. I was with her the entire time. She was very sick. I remember sitting in the ward and suddenly I hear the nurse

calling me: 'Your mother's here.' I can't put into words what I felt then. It was as if we had survived that entire nightmare, as if it was all over. I thought her hands would heal our pain. We were living in the Kizil-Oktyabr kolkhoz. Little Shakhid, Rashid and Zareat died from typhoid fever. Very many died from that disease. My sister and I were destined to survive. There wasn't any time left to study: Driven by my sense of responsibility to my family, I went to work at the kolkhoz. I didn't shrink from any work whatsoever. They didn't pay us money back then, but I could eke out a little food. And that was something worth celebrating.

"I married Bayant Bakhmadova in 1947. We spent 56 years together. She was a true friend to me. That is very important to family life. Bayant left this world in 2003. We had twelve children, five of whom died. The rest live with their families: Ayman, Amnat, Abdat, Subar, Mokhmad, Akhmad and Asma.

"Despite the tragic events that we survived, over the years, the Kazakh earth bore fruit for us. We raised a lot of livestock and had plenty of meat to eat. Living there, five cousins of my grandfather visited the sacred earth of Mecca: Mutsa, Ingish, Dada, Kira, Isbyakha — the last made two trips to the Muslim holy land and did not return the second time. He made his home there.

"We returned to Chechnya in 1962, but we were not allowed to return to our native village. I bought a house in Armyanskiy farmstead. We've lived here ever since. This area was deemed hazardous for residents due to rock slides. They promised to help and they say that the federal government even allocated resources. But they never reached us. It seemed like all our misfortunes were behind us, but now life has become difficult again. We're forced to again survive instead of living."

"SURELY THE ALMIGHTY WAS TESTING US IN THIS MANNER..."

Said-Khasan Khamidovich Magomadov was born on September 15, 1938, in the village of Elistanzhi in Vedensky District.

"I remember everything as if it were yesterday," Mr. Magomadov recounts. "That grim February day. The snow fell in large flakes. It was very cold, the wind pierced us to the bone. The cars couldn't reach all the villages due to the road conditions. We lived in one house with my grandfather Akhmad, my grandmother Ashat, my grandfather's second wife Zaynap and our mother, Mana. A knocking came early in the morning and we were ordered to take whatever we could carry and step out of the house. The soldiers gathered all the men in the school yard under the guise of some very important meeting. The children were running and playing around their fathers. My uncle, Ziyudi Akhmetkhanov had returned from prison ten days earlier. His son, Sharpuddi and I walked up to him. He hugged me and picked me up in his arms. But a soldier approached, yanked me from his embrace and threw me to the ground. I still recall the despair in my normally-impassive uncle's eyes.

"We were taken to the village of Tevzana, twelve kilometers from our house. They transported us on a cart, escorted by soldiers. I was seven years old. My father Khamid had died two months before I was born. He worked as the deputy head of the Kurchaloyevsky District. I was my grandmother's favorite, the only child of her eldest son. She doted on me more than the others: She wrapped me in a wool cover and held my hand the entire twelve kilometers. By lunchtime we had reached our destination. A strange picture awaited us there: many fires with pots filled with meat cooking in them. The people were slaughtering their livestock to have food for the journey. Most of them already understood what was happening, but there were also some that hoped that we would only be taken to Grozny and then allowed to return home. In Tevzana we met up with my grandfather and my uncle. From there they loaded us on Studebakers and took us to Grozny where the cattle train stood waiting for us. They crammed about 50 people in each car. There was neither water nor food. Once in a while, they'd give us zatirukha - a watery soup with flour. Whoever got lucky, got to eat. I don't remember suffering from hunger so much. But the thirst was worse. It seemed to me like I hadn't had a drink in a year. I screamed from the unbearable thirst.

"My uncle Akmad was a very religious person who constantly prayed and fasted. He had brought a pitcher of water with him in order to perform his ablution. Grandfather told him: 'We need to give the boy some water to drink.' I took the pitcher from my grandfather and drained it in an instant. There was an old woman there whose name was Eshirp. She wanted to gather some snow for her daughter and her in order to melt it into drinking water. When the soldier saw her, he hit her on the back with his rifle butt and pushed her from the train into the snow. Several men managed to pull her back into the car. When we reached our destination, she was taken to the hospital unconscious. They said she died there.

"Many women died then due to unhygienic conditions. Whenever the train stopped, they tried to hide under the wagons, but the soldiers beat them and shot at them. And even all these memories don't seem that terrible after the wars that we survived. Surely the Almighty was testing us in this manner.

"I should mention that the soldiers escorting us weren't purposefully trying to split the families. But that happened anyway and regularly as a result of the chaos. For example, one little girl got lost and they took her separately from her parents. Along the journey, when the train stopped, the parents found her again through the rumors of people from the neighboring cars.

"No one would envy our situation back then. We thought that they wanted to throw us into the sea, with the train and all. Because of this, the children couldn't sleep, while our poor parents couldn't calm us down. After all, they were scared too. We traveled for eighteen days. They took us to a very cold place, to Kostanay District in northern Kazakhstan. We finally made it to our destination at the end of March. The soldiers sent everyone to wash up. The little children were sent with the women. I was already eight and was ashamed, yet there were kids older than me there.

"The winter there, in the north, was still in full swing. There was no hint of spring and no one would let us stay in their house. Everyone said that we were cannibals and murderers. It turns out that the Soviet authorities had spread these rumors ahead of our arrival...So we wandered from one house to another. From Kostanay we traveled on sleighs for three to four days to the township of Krasnoselsky, which was populated by Germans, Poles and Banderites, who too had been deported. They had founded that township, which consisted of two roads. The Chechens settled on a third road. There was a nine-year drought in Kostanay, and therefore famine. The first bountiful harvest came in 1953 - it was so large we didn't manage to reap it all. We ate grass: saltbush in the spring and false flax in the summer. We chewed cow parsnips, wild onions and wild garlic. There was forest all around us, so in the spring we could eat plenty of grass, as well as dwarf cherries. Anyone who had even a bit of strength worked.

"We weren't paid money for the work; they wouldn't even give us 100 grams of grain for it. They paid us with zatirukha. Anyone who was capable of working was recruited into the work brigades to work the fields. We'd have to start at dawn. The little children wanted to sleep and the brigade leaders would shove little wads of paper between their fingers and toes and set them alight. I went to school for the first time at the age of 12 and completed six grades. My uncle Saypuddi married me to Nursa at 18 because I was the only inheritor. We spent 45 years together. She died in 1999. My uncle lost two young sons to the famine. In 1951, I caught typhoid fever. Lesions covered my entire body. Everyone decided that I was dead. They were already preparing me for burial. My grandfather grabbed my hand one last time and sensed a weak pulse, so he refused to allow the burial to go on. Thus I survived by some miracle. And yet, happiness did not follow. Hunger and hard labor followed me throughout my life.

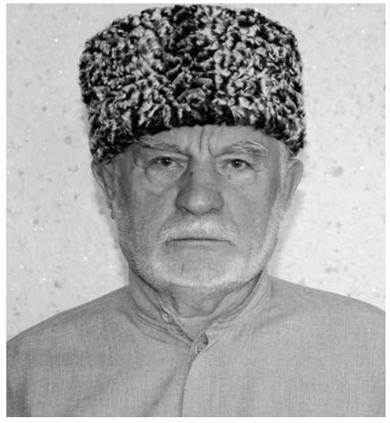
"On May 1, 1957, we set foot on native land in Grozny. Muslim Gayrabekov, may Allah forgive his sins, hired us cars to transport the people to their villages. We received a pass to Shali, but not Elistanzhi. The driver refused to go further than Shali. So we collected all the money we had and gave it to him. Finally, he agreed to take us to our homes. There were Dagestanis living in our houses and they refused to leave them. We spent a week wandering around our own village without a roof over our heads. It rained the entire time. People couldn't understand how they weren't allowed to return to their own homes. The new residents even chased away the children without any pity. It's all clear now: Those people had been brought from Botlikhsky District and settled there on purpose to ensure that the Chechens could never return.

"A Dagestani named Mokhmad lived in my grandfather's house. He could speak Chechen. He allowed us to stay with him. Mokhmad was an administrator at the oil plant. On May 10, 1957, he offered me a position as a record clerk with the tractor brigade. I was the only person from our village who had a job. I spent a year there, and by 1958, the Dagestanis left and the kolkhoz was transferred to the Chechens. After that I worked as an assistant accountant. The regional party committee sent me to Astrakhan to study at the Soviet party school. After graduation, I became an agronomist. I was always working. I didn't know what being tired meant. And I still don't complain. The Chechen people have suffered thousands of trials. May Allah bless them with peace from now on.

"We have a large family with five daughters. I have six grandsons and eleven granddaughters. Thus, you could say I'm a twenty-six-time grandfather. That is my chief wealth."

"I WOULD LET THEM DEPORT ME 100 TIMES OVER, IF IT COULD SPARE ME SEEING THE TWO WARS..."

Khamid Musayev was born on February 6, 1936, in the village of Zakan-Yurt in Achkhoy-Martanovsky District. He is an individual who garners respect in the true meaning of that word. One can hardly bring oneself to refer to him as an old man - that's how much energy and ardor still burns within him.



During that fateful February, the Musayevs had allowed some soldiers from the railroad battalion to bivouac in their home. They were escorting front-line troops to their rest in Mozdok. When the soldiers arrived, Akhmi Musayev (Khamid's father) moved with his family to his father Musost's house, allowing his own residence to be used by the Soviet army. The Musayev family consisted of six people: Akhmi (b. 1907) and his wife, Savdat (b. 1914); three daughters, Ayshat (b. 1939), Maret (b. 1941) and Khadisht (b. 1944); and the hero of our tale, Khamid. The kids' uncle, Daud Musayev, fought in the Second World War.

"It was early on a cold winter morning when the soldiers knocked on our door and yelled: 'Everyone out!'" Mr. Musayev recounts. "Now it seems that this was all a nightmare, but to this day it lingers before my eyes in all its details. Any men of at least fifteen were ordered to the town square where the mosque and school were located. Once there, the soldiers surrounded them in two rings and with machine guns pointed at them ordered them to head to the station and the train. The station was located in the village. Grandfather Musost took me and my sister Ayshat, grabbed two bags of corn flour and a bed cover and drove us on his cart to the station. The entire road was scattered with pillow down, because there was no packing paper and the women were using pillow covers to pack things. I remember unmilked cows bellowing, dogs barking and horses rearing. Our father met us at the station, since the soldiers knew him and respected him. They got into an American car with him and went home to pick up the other members of our family.

"Akhmi already knew that we would all be deported to Kazakhstan. They'd explained it to him right away. On his return he brought 63 sacks of corn flour with him thanks to which we never had to go hungry. The train they loaded us into was designed to transport livestock. There were three levels in our car. A very helpful feature, which the other cars did not have. I spent the entire journey on the third level. On the way, two people died in our car. Said was buried in the snow. His son was a pilot on the front. Another man was buried in the snow as well. His name was Dasha. Both had died from typhoid fever, which killed many back then. We were also fed with zatirukha, a watery soup with flour in it. This was the standard fare for prisoners of war and convicts. And they gave us boiling water too and a piece of rye bread - one per person, depending on how many people were in the car. That would happen only when the train stopped for a long time. People would be notified of this stop by a long drawn-out whistle from the engineer. A hole was hacked in the middle of the car's floor for sanitation purposes. This was screened with bed covers. The younger girls suffered in particular from shame before the adults. Many simply couldn't bring themselves to use this makeshift toilet. Rumor had it that it wasn't rare that this had fatal consequences.

"On March 13, 1944, the train reached Osakarov station in Karaganda Region. We emerged from the cars to find sleighs yoked to camels waiting to take us to the farmsteads. We loaded our belongings and ourselves onto the sleighs. The weather was very damp, the snow was melting. Our family was settled about a kilometer from the station in Nurinsky District at the Put' Lenina kolkhoz. In 1945 we were relocated to the second section of the Nurinsky sovkhoz in the same district. "The Kazakhs had been terrified by the terrible stories spread about the Chechens. They had told them so much nonsense! That cannibals were coming, savages, maniacs. Who would be happy to welcome such neighbors? Despite these horrible fairy tales, one leading Kazakh - his name was Abubakar - had prepared his son's house for our arrival, moving his son to live with him. I remember seeing a Quran on his shelves among other religious texts. He would tell people, 'The newcomers are Muhajirun. There is a place prepared in hell for anyone who treats them poorly.'

"Generally speaking, the local residents treated us very well. They would slaughter livestock for the winter and if you had more children than your neighbors, they would share the meat with you. Our father worked on the harvests. Our mother stayed with us. From the age of nine, I helped my parents with the sowing. To this day, sitting around without work makes me ashamed before the Almighty. Our father insisted I complete school. 'It'll be a great misfortune if you end up uneducated,' he said. By the time I was nineteen, I had completed seven grades. After that I studied to be a driver. Once the announcement came that we could return home, we sold two houses and went to the Osakarov station. But there it turned out that our permits to leave were fake and we were turned away. We were forced to buy a new house. People found a way to make money even with the permits. At the end of December 1960, our relatives returned to Chechnya. And on October 12, 1961, I found myself on the train headed on the most important journey of my life. We were going home. As we approached Gudermes, my heart was about to burst from my chest. I felt like my happiness could make me fly. I got married on October 5, 1965. We had six children: Magomed-Khuseyn (b. 1966), Magomed-Emin (b. 1968), Magomed-Sani (b. 1970), Zarema (b. 1972), Zareta (b. 1973), and Zarina (b. 1976).

"Despite all our hardships, we should remember the good. Consequently, our people were fated to undergo all these trials. Such was the will of the Almighty. But I would let them deport me 100 times over just to avoid seeing the two wars. And yet even those were destined for us too."

"THREE SOLDIERS WERE ASSIGNED TO EACH HOUSE..."

Movzar Zakariyevich Dadayev was born on May 5, 1932, in the village of Zakan-Yurt. He has the status of veteran of WW2. His account is as follows:

"There were only three brothers at home: The eldest, forty-year-old Zakri, Uvays (b. 1920) and I. Zakri's mother, Khazhgaz, his wife and little son Iles were also with us. Dada's father had died in 1934. Uvays' and my mother had died too.

"Soldiers flooded into our village right before the deportation. The place teemed with them like an anthill with ants. Almost every day they'd assemble the able-bodied citizens in the village square and send them to dig trenches and ditches: They told us that the German tanks were nearby. Now I think they did this simply to control the population and get a sense of who may try to resist.

"On February 23, 1944, interior troops we had never seen began to evict us from our homes. They were wearing new

FEBRUARY 23, 1944 — FEBRUARY 23, 2017

uniforms and carried polished weapons. That morning they gathered the men in the village square as per usual. They surrounded them with three rings. I was twelve years old then and I watched this unfold with my companions. A Russian soldier got up on the platform. I don't know his rank since back then I didn't know how to read them. He began to say something, but we didn't understand him because we didn't speak Russian. Then the interpreter began to speak. He announced that we were being resettled to Central Asia and Siberia under Beria's orders.

"Later I found out that Beria had personally commanded that operation. On February 17, 1944, he reported from Grozny that preparations were almost complete and that the operation would deport 459,486 people. The operation was scheduled to take place over eight days and involved 19,000 operatives from the NKVD, NKGB, SMERSH and another 100,000 or so officers and soldiers from the NKVD troops. On February 21, Beria issued the NKVD order to deport the Chechens and Ingush.

"After this, the soldiers surrounded the men with five on each side and organized them into rows. Then they marched them to the station which was two kilometers from the village. The train, designed for transporting livestock, was already waiting. Only women, children and the elderly remained in the homes. Three soldiers were assigned to each house. Understanding that we posed no threat to them, the soldiers did not carry weapons. They understood our situation and even did what they could to help us. There wasn't any transport, so we had to wait for our neighbors' carts to become available. As a result I was running back and forth to see when it would be our turn. The first thing we did was load the cart with three sacks of corn flour, mattresses and bed covers. Little Iles was very upset; he kept saying that he wouldn't go anywhere. There weren't any screams or panic on our part, but everyone could sense the pressure. As they say, we felt the fear of the unknown, the unknowable at our backs.

"When we were gathering our quilts, the little one kept plying his line: 'Don't take everything! What am I going to sleep on?' We assembled ourselves and stepped out of the house. Iles didn't come out. Unhappy with this behavior, the soldier ran into the house and carried him out, resisting, in his arms. They gathered all of us at the edge of the village, near the cemetary, and then herded us to the station to load on the train. Some of the cars were completely empty. Others had shelves. Ours had two shelves that I could sleep on. Children of our age climbed up to the top one. The mothers with their children occupied the lower shelf. The men slept on the floor. There were no comforts to speak of. The men instantly chopped a hole in the floor to make something resembling a toilet. On our journey, we were given boiling and cold water at any possible opportunity. Sometimes, they gave us soup to eat, but very little - the rations were tiny. It seems they were only feeding us so that later we wouldn't claim that people were simply starved to death.

"No one saw it coming. Spring was approaching and everyone had been getting ready for the sowing season, clearing the weeds...We spent our first night in the train cars which hadn't yet moved from where they stood. The next morning, it snowed so much that and adult would sink up to his knees in the ensuing banks. Finally the train moved. Our journey lasted thirteen days. On the dawn of the fourteenth, we arrived to Osakarov station in Osakarov District, Karaganda Region. Sleighs sat waiting for us harnessed with horses, camels and oxen. Some of us only had two kilometers left to travel, others five and still others ten. It depended on how far away this or that township was where the people were being taken to live. Or to die. Having set foot on Kazakhstani soil, many were destined to remain there for all eternity.

"The place we were assigned for permanent residency was called Kukmuldyr. It was in Nurinsky District, near the Ondrus kolkhoz. On April 1, we were ordered to go help the sowing along with the workers from the local sovkhozes and kolkhozes. They were mostly women and children, since the men were away fighting with the army. The Kazakhs were wary of us, but on the whole they treated us all right. I began to work in the kolkhoz with my brothers and my oldest brother's mother. Zakri's wife stayed home with the two children, Iles and the orphan Akhyad. Akhyad was her nephew, her sister's son. We earned workday credits for our labors. I didn't know back then what that meant and why they were recorded.

"We didn't have people dying from hunger, so our conditions were decent. More precisely, the food situation was difficult until the end of April, but later everything went much better, especially once the harvest began. During the harvest, we lived where we worked, spending the entire time in our brigades. The kolkhoz issued three cows to each brigade. There were two cooks as well. In the morning we would drink boiling water with milk instead of tea and receive 80 grams of bread per person. For lunch they gave us something that resembled pearl barley porridge, although this grain was extremely tasty. To this day I can recall how that porridge tasted with milk. After we'd gathered the hay, we'd gather the grain. And so it went until the first frosts. It snowed so much that November that you couldn't go anywhere. In November we returned home from the field camp. But there was no time for rest at home either. There was a lot of work to be done if we wanted to survive. Our neighbors were Bay-Ali and Mokhmad, neither of whom are still alive, may Allah forgive their sins. Mokhmad and I spent all winter caring for 45 calves and 6 camels. Time flew by, the spring returned and we set off for the hay fields again.

"In 1947, Uvays left for Osakarov District. Zakri stayed in Ondrus. And I entered vocational school and continued working in the mines. If you missed work there without giving good reason, you would be docked a quarter of your pay for four months. And if you missed two days, you would be docked half of it for six months. If you missed three days, regardless of whether in a row or separately, you would be incarcerated for four months. Illness was considered a sufficient reason to miss work, but you had to provide medical documentation. During my vacation, I visited Uvays and met Zabo there. We got married in 1951. We spent 61 years living together and had fifteen children: eight boys named Rizvan, Mustafa, Malik, Ruzman, Gilani, Mokhmad-Emin, Mukhamed, Ali, and six daughters named Raisa, Asma, Zara, Maryam, Aset, Khava. Another son, Rizaudi, passed away at the age of seven months.

"Uvays returned to Chechnya in 1960, Zakri a year later, and I reached my native land on January 1, 1962. Our lands in the native village had been divided among the residents. Each person was allotted 0.065 hectares. Living there was complicated: There was neither gas, nor water, and we still had to find work to feed our families. So we ended up moving to the Melnikov township. Our relatives lived there even before the deportation and had returned later. The lot had water as well as gas with light. I looked for work where there was more pay, but neither I nor my cousin Abubakar were accepted at the mining office. So we had to take what we could and we got jobs as loaders. We figured they'd see that we were good workers and would transfer us. But that never happened, so we kept working.

"The cold and the hunger were hardly the most difficult things in that foreign land. Our family suffered heavy losses. Little Iles, the same boy who resisted as hard as he could when we were leaving, died in 1945. Lesions appeared around his mouth - I don't know what the disease is called. He began to suffocate. It seemed he couldn't get enough oxygen. We took turns caring for him. He was a very intelligent and sensitive child. When he fell ill, his mother brought him a pan for his bodily needs while we were all sitting in the same room with him. Outraged, Iles jumped up and struck his mother: 'How can you offer me something like this in front of my uncles?' When the children clamored, Iles would calm them down: 'Look, mother is sleeping. She is tired.' He was a wonderful four-year-old. His passing became a great loss for us.

"In 2015, a court recognized me as a WW2 veteran. Since my time in employment was recorded as beginning in 1945 and witnesses testified that I had worked 12 years. As a result, I was issued a veteran's attestation."

"THE DEAD WOMAN WAS LYING IN THE SNOW WITH HER CHILD STILL TRYING TO SUCKLE AT HER BREAST..."

Magomed Akhmadovich Dadalov was born in Grozny on March 14, 1934. Mr. Dadalov's account of the deportation is as follows:

"In 1944, we lived in Yuzhny locality of Staropromyslovsky District. Our family consisted of five people: My father Akhmad, my mother Siylakh, my brother Khamid and I. Vakha was born in 1946 in Kazakhstan and died as an infant. At the time of the deportation, I was 10 years old. I am the eldest of my brothers. Our father worked in Yuzhny as a driller. He wasn't at home when the soldiers showed up. They appeared at four in the morning and ordered us to gather our belongings.

"It was evident that they wouldn't tolerate any questions. We gathered our things. My mother carried my brother Khamid in one arm and something like a bed cover in the other. I don't remember exactly. Snow was falling - I could hear its crunch underfoot. Chaos reigned out in the street. People had no idea what lay in store for them, what the sol-

FEBRUARY 23, 1944 — FEBRUARY 23, 2017

FEBRUARY 23, 1944 – FEBRUARY 23, 2017

"I FELT LIKE IF I TOUCHED MY STOMACH, MY FINGER WOULD TOUCH MY SPINE..."

Khuseyn Khadzhiyevich Okuyev was born in the village of Samashki in 1934. His wife, Zura Abdurakhmanovna, was born in the same village in 1940. As the couple related their tale of the deportation, they filled in each other's sentences like two people who had spent a long time together.

"What can I say?" Mr. Okuyev begins, barely containing his tears. "I wish that the people who did that to us on February 23rd were disappeared in the same way."

"Don't say that, you shouldn't say things like that!" Mrs. Okuyeva objects.

"We lived in the village of Samashki," her husband goes on. "There were five of us: my father Khadzhi, my mother Zugi, my sisters Sovdat and Khamsat and I. Sometime before the deportation, soldiers surrounded our village. We felt like we were their guests and not the other way around. That's how rudely they behaved themselves. My parents didn't work because there were no jobs available. They tried to get by however they could. My father was a watchman in the forest for a while. Later even that work disappeared. Well, I suppose today is no different. How do people survive these days?

"I was already older when I entered the second grade. It doesn't do to compare me to ten-year-olds today: It was a different time back then. You grew up quickly. If you had learned how to stand and taken your first steps, you were old enough. That was our upbringing. Snow was falling that day and everything around us was white. And so it seemed as if the earth had become endless. The way the soldiers behaved, you'd think they were the masters of this land. At lunchtime, we were ordered out to the street and herded to the station where they loaded us into cattle cars. Our journey lasted about 15 to 16 days. They would give us water. Our car had a potbelly stove - someone had thought of bringing it with them.

"Our guards were human. Yes, you heard me correctly: They were human and not rabid dogs or something. And yet these humans no longer resembled humans. They allowed us to take as much food and belongings as we could carry. The journey wasn't so terrible compared to what awaited us at our destination. The train arrived at Lepsa station in Kazakhstan's Almaty Region. No one had prepared for our arrival. There was neither firewood, nor food, nor covers - the houses were bare. Live however you like.

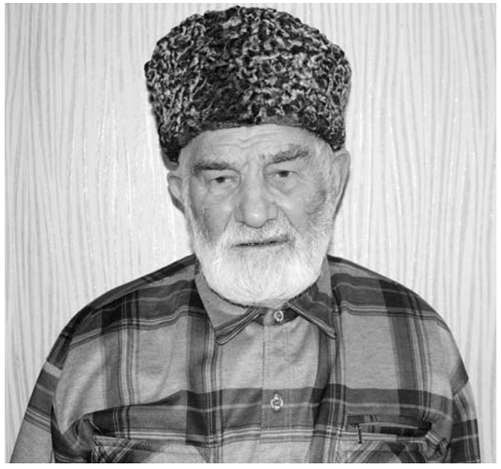
"We didn't go to school. I don't believe there was one. And anyway, we hadn't the strength to go anywhere owing to the hunger. There wasn't any work either. The only thing that saved us was doing temporary work for the Kazakhs. They paid us in produce. If it so happened that a Kazakh offered us some tea, it was already a great feast. We, the children, made a fishing pole with a hook at its tip. We would go to the market and when the vendors were distracted, bam - we would snatch an apple or a tomato and run away.

"There weren't many literate people among the Kazakhs, so my uncle on my mother's side, Abdulkhamid Alisultanov was quickly noticed and installed as the supervisor of the shoe workshop. Despite my age, he forced me to go to the workshop and watch how boots were made. Later I studied this craft for three months. Thanks to my uncle's stubbornness, I became a cobbler.

"It's especially painful for me to recall one detail. My uncle would buy a loaf of bread which was round because it was baked without a form. And every evening my uncle would give me the bread so that I could take it to my family. On my way home, I'd pick off bits of it and eat as much as I could. Until my stomach hurt. There was only half a loaf left when I got home. And even though he knew I was eating it, my uncle continued to entrust me with the task. Even though he had two wives and five children back at home. Our house had a single couch for six people. My uncle would frequently give me shoe blanks so that I could hammer the sole. It was his way of making my job easier.

"We were hungry for such a long time! We were desperately emaciated. I felt like if I touched my stomach, my finger would touch my spine. Of course it wasn't actually like that, but that was the feeling. There were so many misfortunes we had to face! Yet even now it's not that much different. Yes, there are some who live comfortably, but the day will come when they'll have to pay for their comfort. There was a stove on the street. I'd throw meat in a pot and place it to boil. My mother and sister would travel to Alakol District to tend to potatoes. They would return with potatoes and we would stuff ourselves with them. The odd thing was that no matter how much you ate, you never felt satiated. Most of the time we ate wheat

"I remember the moment the train set off. And that journey. When we stopped, armed soldiers would open the doors and remove the corpses. Women and men suffered from the lack of sanitation."



diers were going to do. We were driven to the city where the train stood waiting. The train cars did not resemble those used for transporting people. Later I learned that these cars were designed to transport horses but had been modified with shelves.

"I remember the moment the train set off. And that journey. When we stopped, armed soldiers would open the doors and remove the corpses. Women and men suffered from the lack of sanitation. Whenever we'd stop, both (but the women in particular) would crawl under the train. Then the soldiers shot at them and the train crushed them. No one cared. It was like we were animals.

"The journey lasted a long time. We arrived in Almaty. There were people waiting at the station for our neighbor Isi, who was an oil worker. He offered to take us to the Gurev township. But my father declined, saying we wouldn't go there. They took us to Shieli District and from there to the village of Malabay. It was located about twenty kilometers away. We had a hard time of it. No one had any time for us. The cold, the hunger, the disease. It was so cold that people couldn't bury the dead: A single grave would take a week to dig. The ground was frozen solid. I witnessed a dead woman firsthand: She was lying in the snow with her child still trying to suckle at her breast. A terrible image. The Kazakhs did not help us: They said we were cannibals. They were afraid of us. The commandant's office did not allow us to wander further than five kilometers from the village under threat of 25 years' imprisonment.

"After a month, my father found us by some unfathomable miracle.

"He and some other men were recruited to clean canals. There, according to his companions, a piece of ice fell on his head, killing him on the spot. That happened almost immediately after we had arrived. As a result, we were left without a house and without a breadwinner. It was very difficult for my mother. The kolkhoz had a doctor named Matroshina, a Russian. She got mom a job as a custodian at the hospital. One of the other doctors at the hospital advised her to send me to an orphanage, claiming that they would bring me up to be a worthy adult.

"That's how it transpired. I was sent to an orphanage in Shieli District. Little Khamid stayed with our mother. She would take him to work with her. I spent 8 years in the orphanage. I understood perfectly well where my mother lived and how to get there. Eventually, I decided to run away. At night I hid myself among the mowed hay, spent the night there and the next morning found a Kazakh with a harnessed cart. I asked him to take me where he was going. He shared some of his bread with me. In this manner, at first on the cart and later on foot, I reached the house where my mother and brother lived. I was already mature and understood that I'd now be responsible for my family. A little while later, they built a timber mill near us. As a result, our conditions improved. I began to work and feed my family. The government gave us a single cow, but someone stole her from us and ate her. I'm sure of it. If the thieves hadn't eaten her, we'd recognize her later.

"My mother and I returned home in 1966. Khamid stayed in Almaty with his wife. They had an apartment there. He worked as a welder. He spent many years living abroad, but death encountered him on his native soil, may Allah forgive his sins. As I said, my mother and I had already returned. We settled in the township of Artemovsky Elevator. Our houses had been occupied by some Russians. They didn't want to leave and we spent a long time in conflict with them. Not getting anywhere, I built a new house in the same village. In 1971, I married Maya. We had four sons: Aslan, Akhmad, Anzor and Ramzan. Only Akhmad and Ramzan survived.

"It seemed like all the trials of fate had already crashed over us and we had survived it all and there was nothing new that would surprise us. And yet there are new calamities constantly occurring. It must be nice for those who have an easy life. The Chechens have never had it easy. People must know their history and honor their past if they wish to avoid repeating the same mistakes again and again."

husks. Mother scolded us, saying that it would make our stomach hurt. But we ate them anyway because our stomachs already hurt from the hunger. I'll never forgive, and I'll never forget!

"There was a Russian living next to us in a brick house and my first order came from him. They didn't have any money so they paid with produce, but what can be greater than food? My hunger finally left me when I began to make footwear. While visiting with Uncle Musa, I met Zura. We got married a little later. Her support and understanding during those trying years was invaluable. But, as strange as it sounds, I would 'give an arm and a leg' for a chance to return to that time. Why? People were different then. They were more compassionate. If you were to compare society back then to the present day, the people back then were pure gold. These days everyone is much pettier. Allah tested us, but he also rewarded us afterward. He gave us everything. We never complained about not having this or that. We had it all: milk, farmer's cheese, sour cream, butter, meat, grain. That's how we lived. Later, they announced that we could return home. In 1961 we returned to Samashki. Our house had been bought out from the village council by our relatives, so we couldn't move back in. We were forced to rent."

And here follows Mrs. Okuyeva's tale:

"My family lived in Samashki as well. Abdurakhman Kagirov, my father, worked as a lineman, while my mother, Bega Kagirova stayed home with my little sister Zara and me. There were soldiers living in our house, including some women. They would frequently climb up to the roof and use binoculars to observe the airplanes flying through the sky. I didn't know that those things were called binoculars back then. We weren't allowed to turn the light on at night. That morning, they led my father out of the house and over to the other men in the center of the village. My little sister was in my mother's arms, while I clung to her dress. My mother held Zara with one arm and used the other to throw a sack of corn flour over her shoulder.

"Then we left our house at the soldiers' orders. I remember the sleet mixed with the snow. It was difficult to walk. We saw my father with the other men, surrounded by soldiers and dogs. Now I know that those were German Shepherds. They had surrounded them as if they were criminals. My mother passed through the ring of soldiers and we heard our father's voice: 'Leave lest you orphan your children!' She didn't listen to him and grabbed him by his shirt collar. He was short and mother was very tall. She didn't listen to the soldier and she wasn't afraid of dogs. She held my sister and the sack of flour, while I held onto her dress. And she dragged my father out of there! Stunned by mother's courage, the soldiers simply let him go.

"We went to the station along with the other villagers. Then we rode on the train for a long time. I remember the journey only dimly. We arrived to the village of Uch-Aral, the district center of Alakol District in Almaty Region. The locals were afraid of us and didn't want to share anything. I don't blame them. They didn't have anything to eat themselves - famine reigned all around us. I don't remember anyone ever throwing away so much as a potato skin. If you had time, you'd eat it. If you were too late, the dog would eat it. They were hungry too, after all.

"I don't have many childhood memories. But I do remember my mother's death. She lay down to suckle her seven-month baby, saying that she had a headache. Then she fell asleep - or that's what we thought - but it turned out that she had passed away. My grandmother was the first to understand. She began to scream: 'Take the boy from her breast! She is dead!'

"On December 3, 1958, I married Khuseyn. I've forgotten many things, but I still remember that well.

"He came to Uch-Aral to visit his uncle. Khuseyn's uncle, Musa, arranged our marriage. There was tension between our families for some time due to various disagreements. But they came to terms at last and that year of disputes passed. We got married and moved in with his parents. It was two kilometers on the gasoline truck to the train station and from there eight hours on the train.

"We got there early the next morning. When we got to the place, Khuseyn stopped by the neighbors' house and asked a woman there to lead me into his house and introduce me to his parents. I was burning with shame. Attitudes were different back then and the youth would never bare their feelings or demonstrate them. This woman took my valise and took me to meet my husband's relatives. My father-in-law asked, 'Whose daughter is this?' The neighbor responded, 'Abdurakhman's!' My father-in-law was very happy, since he had known our family back in Samashki.

"Khuseyn's family lived very well when I came to them. They had three cows, sheep, chickens, three donkeys and turkeys. I don't think anyone else had turkeys or donkeys at all. The donkeys were very useful, until the family bought horses.

"Back then people helped each other. No one ever remembered what teip you belonged to, only your name and your patronymic. If there was a wedding or a dance somewhere, people would come from all the surrounding kolkhozes.

"The authorities were cruel and odious. They used our hunger to govern us. They would burn the remnants of the harvest that the machines couldn't gather - only so the people couldn't get it. But the Almighty did not forsake us. Praise be unto Him!

"We returned to Samashki in 1961. During the two wars we lived in Volgograd. We have five children, named Maymunt, Aminat, Malika, Imran and Islam. We also had a son named Isak, but he passed away."

The above recollections were recorded by Malika Zubayraeva.

ANZOR BAKAROV

GRIEF AMID FESTIVITIES

Ingushetia: The ban on the immortalization of Stalin and the failed proposal to move Deportation Memorial Day to a different date.

On February 22, 2017, deputies from the People's Assembly of Ingushetia unanimously approved a first draft proposal to prohibit the immortalization of Stalin's memory throughout the republic's territory.

The bill ("On the prohibition of immortalizing Stalin's memory throughout the region's territory"), was adopted on the eve of the 73rd anniversary of the deportation of the Ingush people. From now on, Ingushetians will not permit the exaltation of the ruler who "subjected entire ethnicities and individual citizens to mass deportations," said the speaker of the republican parliament, Zelimkhan Yevloyev. According to him, the law provides for a ban not only on the erecting of monuments, busts of Stalin and the use of his name in cities, villages and streets - but also on public apologias and advocacy for his actions, including the use of his image in public areas and governmental facilities with the goal of promoting this individual and his actions.

"It is blasphemous to glorify and erect monuments to a person who deported dozens of ethnicities, a tyrant under whose rule tens of thousands of members of the intelligentsia and the armed forces were shot or sent to prison," said Maryam Amriyeva, chairman of the local Governance and National Policy Committee.
And yet, unfortunately, Mr. Yevloyev's involvement in these matters did not end there. He also proposed to move the memorial day for the victims of the deportation from February 23 to October 30.

Mr. Yevloyev explained this decision with the reasoning that "the country will be able to properly celebrate such great holidays as Defender of the Fatherland Day and March 8." Local media pointed out that during this speech, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, the head of the republic, was among the audience and therefore this announcement was surely officially sanctioned.

Magas, February 23, 2017

Ingush social activists consider that this is an attempt by the authorities to absolve the federal government of responsibility for the death of hundreds of thousands Vainakhs. After all, by its own claim, the Russian Federation is the successor state to the USSR.

Bagaudin Khautiyev, the chairman of the Coordinating Council for Youth Organizations of Ingushetia, articulated the public outrage: "The authorities have made similar attempts before, but over the last 3--4 years they have grown more brazen. The Chechen leadership started this trend several years ago, and now we see the Ingush leadership joining them. There are no doubts that this is no personal initiative on the part of the speaker of the Ingush parliament, Zelimkhan Yevloyev. But I do not know why he decided to voice this issue and do so in the name of the People's Assembly of Ingushetia. It is bad as it is that during the days of mourning for entire ethnicities, we encounter various entertaining spectacles on television, but if there are any commemorative days that should be moved, then the days of mourning should remain untouched."

Video of Zelimkhan Yevloyev's speech proposing to change the date was published on the official Instagram page of the Ingush parliament and was accompanied by an explanatory comment by the press agency of the People's Assembly of Ingushetia: "Due to widespread misinterpretation of the speech dedicated to the tragic date of February 23 by Speaker of the Parliament Zelimkhan Yevloyev, the press agency of the People's Assembly deems it necessary to provide the following clarifications. February 23rd remains and will remain a tragic date for every Ingush family and cannot be

struck from the people's memory. We wish to formally declare that the People's Assembly of the Republic of Ingushetia is not considering moving this date to a different day. Deputies from the Republican Parliament are proposing to declare October 30 an All Russian Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinist Repression so that the entire country might bow its heads before the many ethnicities of Russia who innocently suffered this repression."

Users on the Instagram page expressed their displeasure with Mr. Yevloyev's announcement in their comments to the parliamentary press agency's post.

"Even if you wanted it, who authorized you to change the date of mourning? Did you ask the people?" asked user "cacausus_ing."

As Chechnya celebrated a holiday, Chechens in Europe held a meeting in memory of the victims of the deportation.

On February 23, 2010, in a post on his Instagram account, Chechen head Ramzan Kadyrov wrote as follows: "Joseph Stalin (may he be damned a thousand times) wished to wipe our people and their memory from the face of the earth. Thousands upon thousands of Chechens defended the Caucasus, Stalingrad, and Moscow. They broke through the blockade of Leningrad, captured Konigsberg and Berlin, and liberated Warsaw, Kiev, Prague and Vienna. As gratitude for this, Stalin decided to do away with the Chechen people. There is no war that is not accompanied by a surge in crime. This is the way it was thousands of years ago, this is the way it was during the Great Patriotic War, and this is the way it is in our day. And yet, instead of punishing specific, guilty individuals, their criminal activity was

Grozny, February 23, 2017

given a political treatment. It is well known that there were no Chechens among the Soviet ex-citizens fighting in the Nazi ranks. We are utterly certain that the events of 1944 will never occur again. Those who seek to lionize Stalin today - and ascribe victory in the Second World War to him exclusively - should remember that tens of millions died both on the frontlines as well as behind them. It were these victims who defeated Fascism, not Stalin!"

And yet, that same year the Republic's head rendered a decision as a result of which February 23 is no longer commemorated as the anniversary of the Chechen deportation, but as a general Russian holiday - the Defender of the Fatherland Day - during which a military parade takes place in Grozny. Meanwhile, May 10 is the official day of mourning and remembrance.

On February 20, 2014, social activist Ruslan Kutayev, a participant of an unsanctioned conference in memory of the deportation held in Grozny on February 18, 2014, was arrested for drug possession in large quantities without intent to sell. Later that year, on July 7, he was sentenced to four years imprisonment.

Mr. Kutayev, his defense, and members of Russian and international organizations that monitored his trial, all claimed that the criminal case was fabricated, while Human Rights Center Memorial declared Ruslan Kutayev a political prisoner.

Thus a complaint lodged by HRC Memorial on June 19, 2014, states as follows: "Ruslan Kutayev is a political prisoner because his incarceration was effected with the goal of forcing the cessation of his public activities and in contravention of his right to due process, as well as other rights and liberties provided for under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights; it was based on the falsification of evidence imputing criminal wrongdoing in the absence of such evidence."

Meanwhile, on February 23 of that year, Chechens across several European cities and Istanbul held rallies dedicated to the 73rd anniversary of the Stalinist deportation of the Chechen and Ingush peoples. The largest rally was held in Strasbourg, which according to organizers was attended by up to three thousand people of the Chechen and Ingush diaspora in Europe.

"If we were a normal country..."

Such was the heading of an article published by Russian politician Leonid Gozman on February 23, 2017.

If we were a normal country, then February 23 would not be a festival, but a day of mourning and penitence. Seventy-three years ago, NKVD soldiers — whom one should not compare to the SS (since after all their uniforms bore stars instead of swastikas) - were evicting, killing and condemning to suffering and death people guilty only of the fact that they were Chechens and Ingush.

If we were a normal country, then today, on the Day of the Deportation, every church, mosque and synagogue would hold mourning services, while the President of the Federation would be in Grozny and Magas, bending a knee before the memory of the victims. Television would show movies about the deportation and the fates of those who fell victim to that savage regime, while the choirs of Empire would shut up for at least this one day.

But no! We shall never give up a chance to drink a toast, to congratulate the men, to tell ourselves that "we can do it again, from the taiga to the British seas," and so on and so forth. And on television they'll say one more time that we're surrounded by enemies and that we'll soon liberate Kyiv and no doubt Warsaw and Tallinn not long after. After all, that's what they want, our brothers who await our arrival there! And it'll all be so convincing and jovial that the people will once again believe...and when we come to our senses, it'll be too late.

We will remember once again that there is no such thing as smoke without fire and that many (oh so many!) Caucasians switched sides and joined Hitler, so perhaps Comrade Stalin wasn't so wrong when he decided to deport the lot of them. You can see it all in the ones of today - in the migrants who've brought us nothing but dirt and terrorist attacks - they hate us because hating us is in their nature.

And tomorrow we'll get up early in the morning and continue building our Russian world, a stronghold of morality and kindness.

Well, personally, I won't take part in building this "Russian world."

My condolences to the descendants of the victims.

On February 23, 2017, a rally of three thousand people in Strasbourg commemorated the 73rd anniversary of the Deportation of the Chechens and Ingush. Photo retrieved from nohchichi.com

LIDIYA MIKHALCHENKO

REFUGEES: THE VIEW FROM POLAND

Polish journalist Micha? Potocki, editor-in-chief of the op-ed section of Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, is working on documenting events in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. In Brest, he met with hundreds of Chechen refugees during the height of the migrant crisis. In the summer of 2016, Poland practically ceased to offer asylum to refugees. Thousands of people found themselves in limbo in the border city. In an interview with DOSh, Mr. Potocki shared his views on the current situation and discussed why it's not worth expecting an improvement in the plight of the refugees in the near future.

What prompted you to turn your attention to the Chechen topic?

I am closely involved with the topics of Belarus and Ukraine. But as soon as I learned that the situation in Brest, on the border with Poland, was reaching a critical stage, I decided that I would go there the first chance I got. I spoke with a colleague who deals with the problem of migrants in Poland and we decided to work on this problem from both sides of the border. And when I was sent to Belarus to cover the parliamentary elections, I stopped by Brest on the way back from Minsk. Back in Minsk I met with Belarusian human rights activists who were collecting aid for the people at the border. After that, I spent some time in Brest, met with the refugees and later got on the very train that they try to board daily in order to reach Poland. In Terespol, I tried to see as well as I could how they try to cross the border. I wanted to see their entire journey. My colleague, Sylvya Chubkovskaya, specializes in working with migrants. She helped me by trying to obtain information from our border patrol services and human rights activists in Poland. She approached the press agency of the Polish Border Guard, which was receiving many complaints, and cast light on the legal aspect of the problem. In this manner, we collected pertinent material.

Many refugees in Brest claim that the Russian and Chechen special services are planting agents among their ranks in order to collect information. Have you encountered anything of the kind?

The Chechens in Brest told me that not everything could be spoken of safely, that there was surveillance. Belarusian human rights activists warned me of this too. I did not see any such spies firsthand. That is, if I did see them, I did not identify them as such. However, I do know that some of the refugees received threats from these "special people." According to them, they were told that if they return to Chechnya, their families would experience problems. One of the people I spoke with claimed that he was evicted in his city and threatened with violence against his relatives if he refused to return home.

How have the Chechens who have already spent years in Poland adapted to the situation there?

This is an analysis that goes back to the early '90s when the first refugees began arriving as a result of the first and, later, the second wars. Poland became one of the countries that accepted Chechen migrants. As a result of the two wars, about ninety thousand Chechens migrated to Poland; however, only a few thousand ended up remaining there. It bears mentioning that there is a higher level of criminality among them than the average Polish citizenry, yet there was no sharp spike in crime. There were individual cases when Chechens joined radical groups or — in the last few years - left Poland in order to fight in Syria. Of course, I believe that the problems of assimilation that Chechens face in Poland are related to cultural differences among other things, but from the perspective of Polish society they are barely noticeable.

And after Germany opened its doors to Syrian refugees and accepted hundreds of thousands of people in a short time frame, it became clear that this was an error and that it had gone too far. Thus its neighbors in Europe began to carefully hint to Poland that it was better to "close" the door a little on the Belarusian corridor, so that there wouldn't be such a torrent headed through the Balkans and Italy.

In a discussion, you once mentioned that Poland stymied the flow of refugees into the European Union as a result of German pressure, among other things. Where did you get this information?

This is information from unofficial sources. But German pressure is not the only reason. The main reason would be the quite cold attitude towards refugees and other migrants on the part of the Law and Justice party which came to power in 2015. And after Germany opened its doors to Syrian refugees and accepted hundreds of thousands of people in a short time frame, it became clear that this was an error and that it had gone too far. Thus its neighbors in Europe began to carefully hint to Poland that it was better to "close" the door a little on the Belarusian corridor, so that there wouldn't be such a torrent headed through the Balkans and Italy.

German rhetoric changed as well. In 2015, when Viktor Orban (the Hungarian prime minister) began to limit the acceptance of refugees walking through the Balkans, he was called a fascist. And yet as time went on, the rhetoric towards him softened. Of course, the German authorities would never openly tell Poland something like, "good work for violating the law and barring passage to refugees." During the European migrant crisis of 2015, there were many countries who were violating the law: Germany, Hungary, Poland...

The Chechens in Brest are in a particularly odd situation: Belarus continues to grant them permission to depart for Poland without a Schengen visa in their passports; at the same time, it in no way guarantees free entry to Europe.

You raise an important issue. This really is the only place on the border between the EU and the CIS where this is even possible. The reason is the bipartite agreement between Poland and Belarus. But practically speaking, only the refugees make use of this passport regime - Chechen refugees especially. Brest has become legendary among Chechens who are thinking about how they can leave Russia. The Belarusian authorities have no conclusive position on this issue. Belarus is in an ambiguous position. It cannot openly admit that human rights in Russia are being violated to the point that Russia's own citizens are becoming refugees - after all Belarus and Russia are allies. Besides, such an admission is fraught with the threat of a Russian response - Russia might begin to discuss the state of human rights in Belarus. And as we all understand, that is a sensitive topic. Chechens point out that they do not feel safe in Belarus either, in part due to the Chechen agents among them. Minsk, nevertheless, does not wish to exacerbate tensions on the border. Therefore, Belarusian law enforcement has tried to handle the refugees carefully. Along the "slowly but surely" principle. And the passport regime has remained unaltered. Besides, a while ago Belarus and the European Commission entered negotiations about liberalizing the visa regime. One of the EC's conditions is the signing of an agreement allowing for the read-

mission of foreigners, thus paving the way for the possibility of deporting those who have entered the EU illegally back to Belarus.

At the moment, these talks are still ongoing. The EU has similar treaties in place with Russia and Ukraine for example. In exchange, the Belarusian authorities hope to get money from the EU for the construction of a specialized migrant center, for migrants being returned to Belarus. Belarus has tried to demonstrate that it has migrants and that the treaty should be signed and the funds issued as soon as possible. At the same time, it had to avoid pressuring the situation too much to keep the media from shedding too much light on what was going on and thus avoid complicating its relationship with Russia. In a word, the Belarusian policy in respect to the Brest migrant crisis has turned out to be very complicated and multivariate.

Are you still monitoring the situation in Brest? What is the current situation?

Not much has changed there. The Polish Border Guard still refuses to admit many of those who declare their desire to become refugees in Poland. I maintain contact with Belarusian human rights activists. They say that there are still refugees in Brest as well as Kadyrov's people who periodically threaten the human rights activists themselves. Naturally, there are less refugees there currently than half a year ago. After all, by now it's well known in Chechnya that the road to Europe through Brest has basically been closed. Meanwhile, those who were lingering in Brest, have run out of money and their permission to stay in Belarus has expired. As a result, the number of refugees has decreased significantly due to natural causes, though the crisis itself has not been resolved. It's difficult to anticipate something. Poland is developing legislation that will officially allow the Border Guard to make its own decisions in these matters. They will be legally permitted to "turn refugees around."

Belarus is in an ambiguous position. It cannot openly admit that human rights in Russia are being violated to the point that Russia's own citizens are becoming refugees - after all Belarus and Russia are allies. Besides, such an admission is fraught with the threat of a Russian response - Russia might begin to discuss the state of human rights in Belarus. And as we all understand, that is a sensitive topic. Chechens point out that they do not feel safe in Belarus either, in part due to the Chechen agents among them. Minsk, nevertheless, does not wish to exacerbate tensions on the border. Therefore, Belarusian law enforcement has tried to handle the refugees carefully.

Is this legislation subject to EU ratification?

No, it's enough for Poland alone to adopt it. There is a document in the European Parliament and the European Council. It is European draft legislation that in exceptional cases allows border guards of EU member nations to detain refugees in the border zones of airports or border crossings for several hours. The Polish Ministry of the Interior is proposing to make this exceptional procedure regular. But in principle, afterwards it will be possible to petition the European Court to prove that the Polish law violates EU law. As a result it is necessary to work through it carefully.

BARBORA CHERNUSHAKOVA:

"The Polish Border Guard still does its utmost to prevent refugees from entering the country"

An investigator for the regional European and Central Asia office of Amnesty International, Barbora Chernushakova has visited Poland and became acquainted with the situation of Chechen refugees on location.

The human rights activist spoke to DOSh about the new wave of asylum seekers in the European Union and the obstacles they encounter along their way.

What in your view are the main problems facing Chechen refugees arriving in Poland in recent times?

The problems that Chechen refugees encounter on the way to Poland begin on the border between Poland and Belarus, at the Brest-Terespol checkpoint. The local administration's resistance interferes with asylum seekers' attempts to receive passage permission, which contravenes EU law as well as the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Last year, following a series of reports published by international and Polish human rights organizations on the problems facing migrants from Chechnya, Ukraine and Tajikistan - that is, migrants who were seeking to enter Poland through official border checkpoints - the European Union declared a number of measures to ease the process. However, the Polish Border Guard still does its utmost to prevent refugees from entering the country and keep them in Belarus. They continue to employ brief interviews held under conditions that do not guarantee confidentiality. What is more troubling is that Border Guard agents have refused to facilitate requests for international asylum even when the foreign petitioners approached them directly. Pursuant to Polish law on the granting of asylum, if a person wishes to petition the authorities for asylum, the border agent must accept his request and allow him to enter Polish territory. Meanwhile, the main grounds for these rejections were the asylum seekers' lack of earlier-issued legal documents for the right to enter and attestations that the seekers

wishing to enter Poland were not actually "economic migrants."

The new Polish government is frequently accused of failing to perform the obligations it took on by joining the European Union as well as other international agreements to aid refugees. Is this really the case?

The obstacles created by Polish border troops are a quite troubling symptom that amounts to the violation of acting EU law and the UN convention on human rights. In addition to the illegal actions mentioned here, we are troubled by new legislative and administrative initiatives undertaken by the Polish authorities, which could bring about further violations that would further exacerbate the situation of refugees.

Thus, on April 13, 2017, the Polish minister of the interior announced on television that Poland has to be prepared for a situation similar to the one that occurred in Hungary in 2015 when clashes took place between refugees and Hungarian police. The minister clarified that his ministry is working on a resolution on special detention centers for migrants and asylum seekers. Earlier in April, the ministry published a draft amendment to the "Law on special detention centers for foreigners" which provided for the option of using temporary housing for migrants and refugees. Even earlier, in January 2017, the ministry of the interior proposed an amendment to the "Law on the provision of asylum," which provided for a screening procedure for unwanted persons and the partial introduction of blacklists from law enforcement agencies, as well as the automatic detention of asylum seekers applying at the border checkpoints.

It is important to mention that if Poland implements such strategies, the European Commission might declare such measures procedural violations and impose punitive administrative sanctions. Furthermore, the Hungarian response should not be viewed as an example worthy of emulation but rather as a cautionary tale of what not to do. On May 17, 2017, the European Commission accused Hungary of violating procedural rules, having investigated quite similar measures used there, including a number of "border procedures" that did not provide the guarantees that were provided for in the EU legislation. Like the laws adopted in Hungary, Polish laws that provide for "extraterritorial immigration control," in order to expedite border procedures, are not in compliance with EU law. The "border measures" proposed by the Polish minister of the interior, limit access to the procedure for granting asylum to those persons who have do not qualify for the "presumption of safety" requirement in their country of origin (as derived from a special list). As a consequence of such restrictive measures, individuals seeking asylum risk deportation in violation of unconditional prohibition on deportation - that is, forced return to a country where these individuals may be persecuted.

The amendment proposed by the Polish interior ministry also provides for the automatic detainment of claimants who have petitioned for asylum on location at a border control checkpoint. This provision could lead to the automatic and, consequently, arbitrary detention of persons under guard, which is contrary to EU determinations as well as international law. Furthermore, given that there are currently requests for asylum being submitted to the Polish authorities in border regions chiefly by citizens of the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and

> The obstacles created by Polish border troops are a quite troubling symptom that amounts to the violation of acting EU law and the UN convention on human rights.

> Pursuant to international human rights law, under no condition may children be detained as a result of immigration measures.

Ukraine, entering Poland with their entire families, such measures run the peril of leading to the detention of minors. Pursuant to international human rights law, under no condition may children be detained as a result of immigration measures. And we estimate that the majority of those trying to enter Poland through Terespol are children. In this manner, the legislative initiatives of the Polish interior ministry will almost certainly lead to the detention of hundreds of children and their arrests during the period it takes the authorities to render their resolutions - since the families will be concentrated around the border control checkpoints. This is a direct violation of international law.

How do Amnesty International and other human rights organizations try to assist Chechen refugees in Poland?

On April 1, 2017, Amnesty International surveyed Chechens in Warsaw who had received asylum earlier and who had entered Poland through the Brest--Terespol border checkpoint. They all spoke of multiple attempts to enter the country, which were again and again met with rejections from the Polish authorities. And this despite their claims of their intention to petition for refugee status, which is guaranteed by international law. Most of the petitioners complained of lawlessness in Chechnya: They had suffered torture or the threats of coercion against themselves or members of their families. One petitioner claimed that law enforcement threated her by promising to torture her family members.

From the perspective of human rights organizations, it is vital to continue the monitoring of asylum provision in Poland as well as other countries and to demonstrate thereby how human rights violations against asylum seekers and migrants affect the individual fates of those who turn to the EU countries for help in hopes of international protection.

MARIYA TARKOVSKAYA

"MUJAHID" FROM SOBR BEAT MURAD WITH PARTICULAR CRUELTY

Online and print media overflows with news of beatings, tortures and criminal prosecution of natives of the North Caucasus. We frequently read of the beatings, torments and humiliations that young people experience at the hands of law enforcement agents, and we are ever less surprised by them.

Sorrow-struck and distraught, the young men's relatives appeal to the government and society at large to resolve the lawlessness and intercede in the violence of "the monsters in uniforms." Meanwhile, the geographic area of atrocities committed by law enforcement grows ever wider and includes not only the territories of the North Caucasian republics, but also Moscow and other major Russian regions.

In September 2016, we learned of the brutal beating and detention of Russian National Research Medical University student Murad Ragimov (b. 1994) by operatives from the Main Directorate of the Moscow MVD. DOSh detailed this horrible story in its #5-2016 Issue under the heading "Torture with home delivery." Murad's relatives, who witnessed his beating and arrest, approached law enforcement agencies, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists and politicians, in an attempt to intercede in the atrocities committed by MVD agents.

On August 30, 2016, officers from the Moscow Criminal Investigation Department accompanied by SOBR (Special Rapid Deployment Force) operatives raided an apartment in Moscow's Mitino District, where Murad lived with his parents and sisters. Opening the door, Murad crumpled to the floor from a blow to the head, dealt by an armed SOBR operative. Neither the SOBR operatives (identified by SOBR markings on their backs), nor the twenty officers with them, including several plainclothes officers, presented their badges or a warrant for the raid they were conducting.

Knocking Murad to the floor in the corridor and handcuffing him, the SOBR operatives continued to beat the young man, employing a table leg as well as a stun gun to do so. They dragged Murad from the corridor to the kitchen where they continued to torture him for the next four hours.

The cruelest of the SOBR operatives, who was referred to as "Mujahid," used boxing gloves to beat Murad on the face and head in front of his mother and sisters. He also broke a glass candy jar on the young man's head. Not receiving the answer they wanted to hear from their victim, the SOBR agents resorted to bladed weapons: They sliced the pads of Murad's feet and stabbed his heel with a knife.

Meanwhile, the others began to ransack the apartment. Allegedly, they were looking for items prohibited for civilian circulation. They also beat Murad's 60-year-old father who still had no idea what was going on. In reply to the mother's and sisters' demands to cease the beatings of Murad and his father, the SOBR operatives replied that "in Chechnya or Dagestan, such a family would be shot." Their explanation for torturing Murad was that they had received information that Murad had "shot highway patrol officers in Dagestan on August 29, made four trips to Syria, recruited for ISIS and maintained communications with terrorists on the web." The mother and sisters furnished evidence that on August 29, 2016, Murad was in Moscow and showed Murad's passport which bore no markings regarding trips to Syria.

The apartment was also searched by canine handlers S.A. Matviets and O.N. Begletsov (MCID operatives assigned to Moscow MVD's North Western Administrative District) with the use of police dogs which found neither drugs nor explosives - facts attested to by the canine handlers' attestations and testimonies enclosed in the case materials.

Murad was subjected to fascist tortures. Demanding that they be shown where the weapons were hidden and accusing Murad of "cooking drugs at the park every morning," the SOBR operatives kicked him and repeatedly used a stun gun on him. Ignoring Murad's explanations and his request that he be allowed to undergo a lie detector test, they continued to torture him, tightening his handcuffs (as a result of which Murad suffered cuts to his wrist, as documented in photographs). Several times they put a bag on his head, causing Murad to lose consciousness. The cruelest of the SOBR operatives, who was referred to as "Mujahid," used boxing gloves to beat Murad on the face and head in front of his mother and sisters. He also broke a glass candy jar on the young man's head. Not receiving the answer they wanted to hear from their victim, the SOBR agents resorted to bladed weapons: They sliced the pads of Murad's feet and stabbed his heel with a knife. Photographs taken by his family following his hospitalization at the 36th Municipal Hospital, and later Botkin Hospital, document Murad's condition following the beating.

Having failed to corroborate their information that Murad Ragimov was involved in terrorism and extremism, the law enforcement agents planted drugs in the apartment in order to fabricate a "case" against Murad Ragimov and thereby justify the drawn-out special raid to detain a "terrorist," which had been arranged by agents from the MVD's Moscow Center for Combating Extremism and the Moscow Region FSB: After the canine handlers had left, around 9 a.m., "Mujahid" asked Murad's mother and sisters for clothes for Murad, since the young man was in his underwear. The mother and sisters gave "Mujahid" a pair of gym pants and some other articles of clothing. In doing so, "Mujahid" inspected the gym pants for any items in their pockets and extracted the rubber band from the belt before passing these articles to Murad.

The outcome of this special operation was that Murad Ragimov was charged for drug possession. More than ten months have passed since the criminal charges were filed, and yet no evidence has been presented of his involvement in terrorism.

According to lawyers familiar with the case, this case bristles with numerous procedural violations and factual inconsis-

medical assistance. And yet they could see stab wounds on Murad's heel!

Before charging Murad Ragimov with drug possession (Item 2, Article 288 of the RF Criminal Code), he was detained unlawfully for 72 hours — that is he remained under guard and handcuffed in the Mitino District police station. In addition to this, the charges filed against Ragimov were based on a report of a personal search stemming from a misdemeanor offense (Article 27.7 of the RF Administrative Offenses Code), which is inadmissible in a criminal case.

Police search witnesses who were on duty at the time of the raid, Yu.F. Rubtsov and D.S. Yakovlev, claimed that on August 31, 2016, they arrived to the apartment at 10 a.m., and yet according to the search report, they along with Detective Derguasov arrived at the apartment at 7 a.m. In addition to this, these same search witnesses are almost always at the Mitino District police station and travel with police officers to the scenes of arrest in order to witness search procedures, a fact that casts doubt on their veracity.

tencies. A.V. Dergausov, OMVD detective for Mitino District, S.A. Fomin, MVD detective for Moscow's North West Administrative District, and E.A. Orlova, district court judge for Tushinsky District have not tried to establish the truth by means of a complete and multifaceted investigation of the circumstances of the case. Instead, they have confirmed and legitimized the earlier falsified charge of drug possession in order to cover up the criminal actions of SOBR and their colleagues.

After being taken to the Mitino District MVD, Murad could neither sit nor stand owing to the numerous beatings he had suffered. Thus, the officers threw him onto a gym mat in the police station. Murad's attorney twice called an ambulance, suspecting that Murad had suffered a spinal fracture. The doctors were careless and insensitive in offering medical assistance to the tortured Murad. The police officers had lied to them, claiming that Murad was a "foreign terrorist," as a result of which the doctors refused to hospitalize the young man or even offer him

The following is an excerpt from the testimony of the operation's commanding officer - that is, G.V. Mamyrin (head of the 8th section of the Center for Combating Extremism of the Moscow MVD) and other officers of the CCE, A.Yu. Shaposhnikov, A.Yu. Dubrovin, O.O. Dzhiringov (nicknamed "Mujahid," the same one who planted the drugs in the gym pants) — presented in the materials of the criminal case: "At the end of August 2016, the 8th Section of CCE of the RF MVD for Moscow received information concerning a group of individuals belonging to 'Jamaat,' who expound radical forms of Islam and are suspected of being accomplices of the extremist underground in the North Caucasus. Furthermore, several members of this group have participated in combat operations on behalf of the 'Islamic State,' and are currently located in or around Moscow. According to this information, this Jamaat group traveled from the Syrian Arabic Republic to the Turkish Arabic Republic, where it obtained documents based on stolen identities, after which, in small squads and using conspiracy tactics, the group traveled to one of the Arabic countries, later to Ukraine and finally to Belarus. Furthermore, it has been established that Murad Firuddinovich Ragimov (b. January 1, 1994) was a member of this group and had recently returned from Syria to Moscow Region and taken up residence at the following address: 10 Uvarovsky lane, Apt. 17, along with his sister G.F. Ragimova (b. August 4, 1991).
A series of operational-reconnaissance measures was prepared in order to verify the above information. These included an 'examination of the residence.'" Thus all the CCE agents claim that they received the information in question at the end of August. And yet, the Moscow City Court approved the operation on August 5, 2016! Does this mean that the court somehow issued a warrant before it could review its grounds?

> The indictment claims that 13.4g of drugs were found in the gym pants' left pocket. Yet these pants are not included among the material evidence. Accordingly, there is nothing proving that they belonged to Murad. Is this not a circumstance that the court should examine in the course of proceedings?

A further procedural violation in the criminal case is that when the drugs were removed from the apartment, they were not properly packaged: The vials containing the drugs were not sealed in the proper manner, allowing for the chance that their contents had been altered — both in terms of quantity and quality. Attorney M.S. Karplyuk raised this issue at the court hearing and moved to strike this evidence from the case materials. Tushinsky District Court Judge E.A. Orlova denied the motion on the basis that it was "unjustified." In fact Judge Orlova has not granted a single motion submitted by the defense.

The charging document can be effectively summarized as follows: "Sometime before 6 a.m. on August 30, 2016, Murad Ragimov took possession of a controlled substance at an undetermined time, from an undetermined person and under undetermined circumstances," and "in order to more easily consume and store this substance, he divided it into three portions, the largest of which (13.4g) he kept on his person without intent to sell, while the other parts (26.9g

altogether) he kept in his place of residence without intent to sell."

One cannot help but call into question the competence, objectivity and impartiality of an investigator who initially accused Murad of possessing 13.4g of a controlled substance (the vials found in the pocket of the pants, which themselves have not been included in the case evidence!), and then, after five months (from August 30) — that is in January 2017 — accused Ragimov of possessing the remaining portion of the controlled substance in the amount of 26.9g. These suspicions are further exacerbated when the investigation claims that the drugs belonged to Murad even though the apartment serves as the residence of five other people besides him. The logic of the investigatory body evokes bafflement: Why weren't personal searches performed on the other persons residing in the apartment? Why weren't they and their belongings examined on the same grounds?

Murad's 60-year-old father Firuddin Ragimov, who did not have the time to understand what went wrong, was also beaten. The young man's mother and sisters demanded to stop beating Murad and his father, the police responded that "such a family would be shot in Chechnya or Dagestan."

The indictment claims that 13.4g of drugs were found in the gym pants' left pocket. Yet these pants are not included among the material evidence. Accordingly, there is nothing proving that they belonged to Murad. Is this not a circumstance that the court should examine in the course of proceedings?

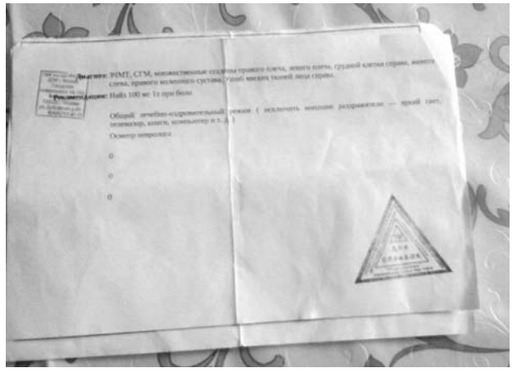
Attorneys point out that Detective S.A. Fomin has made no attempt to examine all the possibilities of how the drugs ended up in the apartment. And this despite the fact that the canine handlers reported that they had found neither drugs nor explosives in the apartment! Furthermore, chemical tests done on the day of Murad's arrest, found no traces of drugs or explosives on Murad's hands. And, the detective did not test the vials containing the drugs that allegedly belong to Murad for his fingerprints (two plastic vials of the kind employed for submitting medical test samples). How then, did Murad who "in order to more easily consume and store this substance, divided it into three portions," manage to keep the residue from his hands and his fingerprints off the vials?

If Murad had drugs at home, would he open the door to the police without first trying to dispose of the substance? He had the opportunity and time to do so, for example, flushing them down the toilet while the police broke down the door!

In the charging document, Detective Fomin points to the testimony of the police witnesses to the search and the numerous MVD Moscow agents who all claim that no one beat or tortured Murad. Which means the drugs belong to Murad. While the traumas Murad suffered are explained as stemming from the resistance he offered. And yet, it's unlikely that a handcuffed person is capable of resisting armed SOBR operatives.

On the day of the incident, Murad's relatives submitted a complaint to the Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee, claiming criminal conduct by the MVD Moscow agents who beat Murad before their eyes and later fabricated a criminal case against him. Deputy Prosecutor of Moscow's NWAD V.R. Markarov, to whom Murad's sister submitted the complaint along with photographic evidence of Murad after the beating, promised to investigate the matter, telling her that "no one is allowed to be beaten in Russia." However, the same Markarov later approved the charges against Murad Ragimov.

Certain of his innocence, Murad's relatives have been trying to meet with the head of the Investigative Committee, A.I. Bastrykin, since September 2016. However, each time



they try to arrange a meeting, they are denied for another 10 months by the office head with the formulation that "no need has been determined." It was only on December 29, 2016, that Murad's parents and sister, along with Anastasia Garina, a lawyer from the human rights organization Committee for the Prevention of Torture, were invited to meet with the head of the Investigative Committee for Moscow, Brigadier General A.A. Drymanov, who listened to their complaint and ordered Colonel S.M. Yarosh to investigate reports of the torture of Murad and his father. Brig.-Gen. Drymanov assured the visitors that he would "personally supervise" their complaint. This instilled in them the hope that the head was interested in investigating the reports of torture that Murad and his father were subjected to. Brig.-Gen. Drymanov ordered that the probe materials be transferred to the NWAD Moscow Investigative Committee and that a series of medical tests be conducted on Murad and his father, including blood work to establish whether he had suffered shocks from a stun gun. And yet, Detective A.A. Zotova did not perform a single order of the Brigadier General, and instead refused to charge MVD agents on the basis of testimony by the same people who tortured Murad (i.e. the very same MVD agents). Her formulation of this in her refusal is noteworthy: "Each of the examined individuals is a close relative of M.F. Ragimov and is interested in seeing a positive resolution to the case. Their testimony is aimed at assisting M.F. Ragimov avoid criminal liability or mitigate his responsibility for his criminal actions." That is, before the court proceedings have completed and determined Murad Ragimov's guilt, Detective Zotova violates the fundamental presumption of innocence and the court's exclusive purview to establish guilt, and allows herself to evaluate the evidence of the "criminal actions" committed by Murad Ragimov. Likewise, it follows from Detective Zotova's rejection that in view of the fact that M.F. Ragimov and the interviewed MVD agents had no hostile, business or other relations, these agents had no reason to slander or beat Murad. It is curios why Detective Zotova did not apply her own "logic" to the MVD agents accused of exceeding their authority and torturing Murad and his father? According to her logic, the motive for the relatives' testimony and complaints is to protect Murad from criminal liability — but then, by that same logic, why aren't the testimonies of the Moscow MVD viewed as an attempt to protect themselves from criminal liability?

On February 10, 2017, Mr. Ragimov's mother also submitted a complaint to the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights in Russia T.N. Moskalkova - to little effect. A lawyer for the office, R.Kh. Paygin brushed aside the request for aid, claiming that it had already been submitted as an inquiry to the Moscow Prosecutor's Office (six months before filing the complaint with his office!).

It seems like Russian governance has never been as arbitrary and punitive as now! The activities of law enforcement agencies are focused exclusively on accusations and punishment! And the concrete circumstances of the case or the role of the courts in establishing the truth are almost immaterial. Meanwhile, the henchmen of this punitive machine, who can barely manage to draw up legally-meaningful documents, are certain of their impunity and omnipotence and don't hesitate to mangle defenseless people right in front of their relatives - and then demand gratitude for merely beating and torturing them instead of shooting them on the spot. The accusations made by MVD Moscow agents - representatives of state authority - who make up "operative information" as they go about Murad's membership in a mythological "Jamaat" (they never did furnish evidence of this fact, nor of the existence of the "Jamaat") or about Murad's trips to the mythological "Turkish Arabic Republic" — have no basis in evidence and are therefore absurd.

THE SUPREME COURT OF CHECHNYA UPHELD THE VERDICT OF JOURNALIST GERIEV

On December 28, the Supreme Court of Chechnya upheld the verdict of the Shali district court in the case of journalist Jalaudi Geriev (DOSH wrote in detail about his case in one of the previous issues): three years in prison for alleged possession of marijuana. In the court of first instance, Geriev did not plead guilty and claimed pressure on him during the investigation.In the Supreme Court of Chechnya, Geriev and his defense asked to cancel the verdict of the Shali District Court as unlawful and not fair, but the state prosecutor demanded to leave the decision of the first instance court unchanged, with which the Supreme Court agreed.In his last word, Guriev called Allah to be the judge."I'll be damned if I've ever had anything to do with drugs and what I'm being charged," he said. According to him, the investigators and field agents repeatedly told him that they knew that he was not guilty, but they could not do anything about it.A statement in support of Guriev was issued by the Union of Journalists of Russia, as so did a number of influential international human rights organizations, such as: The Committee to Protect Journalists Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, Civil Rights Defenders, Front Line Defenders, Free Press Unlimited, Human Rights Watch, Norwegian Helsinki Committee. In October, the human rights center "Memorial" recognized Jalaudi Geriev as a political prisoner.

THREE YEARS WITHOUT ANDREY MIRONOV

Human rights activist Andrey Mironov died working as a translator for Italian photojournalist Andrea Rocchelli on May 24, 2014, outside the villages of Andriivka and Sloviansk, Ukraine.

In 1985 Andrey was arrested for the dissemination of samizdat. In 1986 the high court of Udmurtia convicted him of "Anti-Soviet activism and propaganda" (Art. 70 of the RSFSR Criminal Code) and sentenced him to four years in a labor camp and three years of exile. In February 1987, with Gorbachev's commencement of perestroika, Mr. Mironov was released along with other political prisoners.

Mr. Mironov worked in many "conflict zones," including Chechnya during the Russo-Chechen wars. In particular, he was the first to investigate the use of various types of arms.

Andrey was a pure, incredibly kind and charitable person. He was one of the founders of the Caucasus Initiative Center, the organization that publishes DOSh. Mr. Mironov's passing is a great tragedy and an irreplaceable loss for our collective, as well as for all his loved ones, friends and acquaintances.