



Artur Akhmatkhanov

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**"Even today I think, maybe today, tomorrow, they will return my son to me ... Every night he appears in my sleep and during the day I cry all the time ... That is not a life any more. For me everything came to a halt. I don't live; I just walk over the earth."**

-Bilat Akhmatkhanova, Artur Akhmatkhanov's mother

## "THIS IS NOT A LIFE"

In April 2003 22-year-old Artur Akhmatkhanov was grabbed by masked soldiers and bundled into an armoured personnel carrier. He has not been seen since.

According to eyewitnesses, it was members of the Russian federal forces (FSB) who detained the Grozny student and human rights volunteer.

Amnesty International has been told that the following day, police and FSB officers collected empty cartridges and a blood-smear cloth from the scene for analysis, but Artur Akhmatkhanov's family has not been told what happened to him or why.

A year after Artur's enforced disappearance, the military prosecutor denied that the Russian military were involved, saying: "[N]o special operations for detaining citizens on the territory of the Chechen Republic were conducted, no citizens were detained and no one was handed over to the law enforcement agencies."

Artur Akhmatkhanov's enforced disappearance is part of a deeply worrying pattern of ongoing human rights abuses in Chechnya and neighbouring republics in the North Caucasus. The Ombudsman in the Chechen Republic reported in 2005 that more than 2,000 people had "disappeared" at the hands of unidentified security forces in Chechnya. The Russian NGO Memorial estimates that up to 5,000 men, women and children have gone missing there since 1999.

Amnesty International knows of only one conviction related to an enforced disappearance.

In June 2007, Amnesty International delivered 4,630 signed postcards for Artur Akhmatkhanov to the Russian Embassy in London with a copy of the report *Russian Federation: What Justice for Chechnya's Disappeared?* An embassy official said he welcomed dialogue with AI and acknowledged that some enforced disappearances and abductions were the responsibility of the state. He said the concerns raised would be transmitted to Moscow.

Despite this the investigation into Artur's disappearance has been suspended.

Artur's mother, Bilat Akhmatkhanova, has never stopped searching for her son.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### 1. Write to President Vladimir Putin

Start your letter "Dear President Putin"

President of the Russian Federation  
Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin  
Rossiiskaia Federatsia  
103132 g. Moskva  
4 Staraya Ploshchad (or Old Square)  
Prezidentu Rossiiskoi Federatsii  
PUTINU V. V.

Or you can send an email via this website:

[http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/send\\_letter\\_Eng1a.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/send_letter_Eng1a.shtml)

Please send copies of your letter to the Russian embassy in your own country.

#### In your letter ask President Putin to:

- explain **why the investigation into the enforced disappearance of Artur Akhmatkhanov was suspended** in mid-2007, especially since the Chair of the Chechen Parliament's commission for the search for abducted and missing persons has said they would try to discover the fate of all missing persons by the end of 2007
- **reopen the investigation** immediately and ensure it is conducted in a thorough, independent and effective manner, with the findings made public and the perpetrators brought to justice
- keep Artur Akhmatkhanov's **family informed** of all developments in the investigation
- conduct an **official inquiry** into the effectiveness of the investigations into enforced disappearances - numerous judgements of the European Court of Human Rights have found the Russian authorities **guilty of violations** of the European Convention on Human Rights and of failing to investigate them effectively
- take steps **to end violations** committed by Russian security forces and to ensure that law enforcement agencies operate in full accordance with Russian and international law

### 2. Send the message, "Our thoughts and sincere sympathies are with you," to Artur's mother, in Russian, English or your own language:

Address her as "Dear Mrs. Akhmatkhanova"

Bilat Akhmatkhanova  
c/o 'Memorial' Nazran  
46 Mutalieva St  
Nazran, 386100  
Republic of Ingushetia  
Russian Federation

#### FIND OUT MORE

- Watch a moving interview with Artur's mother here: <http://snipurl.com/bilat>
- Read *Russian Federation: What Justice for Chechnya's Disappeared?* at: <http://snipurl.com/whatjustice>

