Russia: Justice for LGBTI victims

To: President Vladimir Putin

Since 2017, Chechen authorities have abducted, tortured, and killed people because of their real or perceived sexual orientation. Everyone has a right to freedom of expression, and to live in safety and free from discrimination. **Please investigate these attacks and hold those responsible to account.**

For more information on this petition please contact: jhansen@amnesty.ca

Sincerely,

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Everyone has the right to live free from violence and discrimination.

Chechen authorities have unleashed a new wave of homophobic attacks since the end of December 2018. At least 40 people believed to be gay or lesbian have been arbitrarily detained and tortured in Chechnya, a republic in the south of Russia.

Around 40 individuals have reportedly been detained in a government building in the city of Argun, where they have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. At least two individuals are reported to have died after being tortured, but the actual number of victims may be higher. Authorities are also reportedly destroying the individuals' passports, making it difficult for them to flee Chechnya.

Russian authorities failed to investigate or hold to account the perpetrators of homophobic attacks in 2017, which involved the abduction and killing of 100 LGBTI people. International outcry in 2017 caused the attacks to slow down considerably, but Russia's inaction has enabled this homophobic crackdown to resume.

On April 1, 2017, the Russian independent daily newspaper, Novaya Gazeta, reported that over a hundred men believed to be gay had been abducted in Chechnya as part of a coordinated campaign by the local authorities. The men were reportedly tortured and ill-treated in other ways, and forced to disclose other LGBTI individuals known to them. Novaya Gazeta claimed to have verified information about at least three men who had been killed by their captors, but its sources claimed that there had been many more killings. Officials in Chechnya and Moscow continuously denied these allegations and the preliminary criminal investigation into allegations of Maxim Lapunov, the only victim who came forward, was closed.

According to Novaya Gazeta, an atmosphere of anti-gay feeling has been growing in Chechnya since early March 2017 when local media reported that Moscow-based gay rights group GayRussia.ru had applied for permits to stage gay rights rallies across Russia, including in Muslim-majority regions.

In the wake of the attacks, members of the NGO Russian LGBT Network created a hotline offering help to those who may be looking for safety outside the region. Some of those who escaped were resettled in Canada.