

FROM THE CONFLICT ZONE

BULLETIN OF HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER “MEMORIAL”

(the issue prepared by HRC “Memorial” in Nazran)

Chechen IDPs Forced Back to Chechnya: “Uchkhoz” in Yandare after June 21

The raid of armed guerilla fighters to Ingushetia on June 21/22 drastically worsened the situation of the forced migrants from Chechnya, who still reside in this republic. In some compact settlements the pressure on IDPs to return back to Chechnya has intensified to such an extent that it can be classified as forced resettlement.

In late June the Ingush Migration Services demanded that all residents of IDP settlement “Uchkhoz” (village Yandare), who still lived in tents, were resettled to the nearby byre. Interestingly, earlier some IDP families wanted to set up rooms inside this cowshed, but were prevented from doing so. At the time the authorities claimed that the cattle, which used to be kept on these premises was ill with brucellosis, therefore the byre was unfit for human shelter.

Top officials of Russian migration service at different levels attended the liquidation of tents: I. Pomeshchenko ÁA-Kh. Kuzikov, and A. Parov. They promised to provide IDPs with construction materials for assembling rooms inside the shed and other necessary assistance in resettlement in the shortest possible time. The only demand of the migration service was to dismantle tents.

Indeed, the next day construction materials were brought to “Uchkhoz”. However, two days later the construction materials “disappeared”: the same people who brought them, loaded all items back on trucks and drove in the unknown direction. Since then, for over a month now, the IDPs have remained virtually in the open air. The roof of the shed is leaking. In the daytime the people sit outside and guard their belongings, and at night they go to sleep to their relatives’ or friends’.

Most of the families have filed applications for return to Chechnya and are waiting for lorry trucks to move. Ingush Migration services, however, announced they do not have enough transport at their disposal, since after the events of June 21/22 the numbers of returnees have sharply increased, and they are unable to meet the demand.

In the meantime, according to IDPs, their compact settlement in Yandare feels like reservation. The gates of the camp are being closed 24 hours. If in the daytime it is possible to find the owner of the camp territory with the key to the gates when is needed (the owner lives in another part of Yandare), at night this is difficult. Thus, in early August an elderly woman had drastic increase in blood pressure, and her relatives were unable to find keys from the gates. In order to take the woman to the hospital, they had to hurdle over the fence and drag her over, then to catch a taxi on the highway, and pay the night tariff. This had to be done in spite of the fact that the family of the ill woman and their neighbors had private cars.

There is no electricity in the settlement. The problems with electricity existed earlier: regardless of the fact that IDPs purchased an individual transformer for their settlement and regularly paid their bills, electricity cut offs were frequent. Last time electricity was turned off on July 17, and as IDPs were informed in “Ingushenergo” electricity company, there were no plans to renew the supply. Since there are no windows in the rooms constructed inside the shed, it’s hard to

function there even in broad daylight. Two days after the last electricity cut off, gas was turned off in the camp.

Moreover, psychological pressure is exerted on IDPs. New deadlines for return are being regularly announced. Ali Chasygov, the owner of the territory, where the settlement is located, warned the migrants that they have to leave the camp very soon, since otherwise, he would have problems with the authorities.

In spite of the fact that in the given conditions, most IDPs are ready to move to Chechnya, there are several families who refuse to return to the republic, where they have no housing or relatives who could temporarily host them. In some families there are seriously ill persons, who requiring special care or those persons, whose psychological state does not permit to live in the conditions of recurrent warfare.

Humanitarian aid for “Uchkhoz” is provided by ICCR only. Since this aid is limited to orphans, handicapped people and multi-children families, only 30% of families get it. Moreover, according to IDPs, the ICCR representatives announced that the aid distributed on August 7, was the last one. According to the commandant of the camp, Ezirbaev Boris, assistance aid from other sources is not being provided.

Generally speaking, the IDPs are on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Families who have young men are double stressed, and expect mop-ups will illegal detainments every night. Parents of schoolchildren are distressed about the upcoming school year: in early August the wooden school of “Uchkhoz” was disassembled by Russian-British Organization CPCD.