

**Information Center
Russian-Chechen Friendship Society**

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URGENT REPORT

**The Search of the Offices of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society Continues
Information Center Correspondent Khamzat Kuchiev Detained**

The search of the offices of the Information Center of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society by members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia continues. The Society has received information that Information Center correspondent Khamzat Kuchiev has been detained.

At approximately 18:30 local time, militia forces burst into the offices of the interregional public organization "Russian-Chechen Friendship Society," located at 36 Dzhabagieva street, apt. 9 in the town of Karabulak in the Republic of Ingushetia. Without producing either identification or a search warrant, the officers began to search the premises. According to preliminary sources, the operation was commanded by Major Ruslam Khamkhoev of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia.

At the time the militia officers arrived, Khamzat Kuchiev, his wife Raisa, and Zaur Kharipov, the Information Center's driver, were all in the office. As the officers entered, those in the office had time to call Imran Ezhiev, the director of the regional branch of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, on his mobile phone and alert him to the proceedings. After this, the militia officers forbid any further use of the telephones. At this time, Ezhiev, who was returning from Chechnya, had already reached Karabulak.

Arriving at the office, Ezhiev noted several vehicles pulled up in front of the building entrance for the office. Among them were: a Zhiguli model 6, license number AOX 633 44 RUS; a Militia UAZ, license number 010206 RUS; a second UAZ, license number 0596 06 RUS; and an additional Zhiguli model 6, license number 367 06 RUS. Entering the office, located on the third floor, Ezhiev found the search being carried out by at least 20 armed men, the majority of them in masks and camouflage uniforms. Ezhiev recognized one of the armed men, who was unmasked, as Major Ruslan Khamkhoev of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Ingushetia. Ezhiev also recognized several of the men as officers of the Department of Internal Affairs of the city of Karabulak.

Subsequently, the militia officers removed computers and other equipment from the office, as well as literature and petitions from the public to the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society. The officers also confiscated a number of petitions and letters from the public to Ella Panfilova of the Presidential Commission on Human Rights and Ludmila Alekseeva of the Moscow Helsinki Group. Next, the officers produced a half-liter jar containing a black powder which resembled

magnesium from the computer room, where they had been searching, still unsupervised by any civilian representative. After this, the officers asked Raisa Kuchieva to go to the neighbors and ask them to come and serve as witnesses, which she did. The officers rudely demanded that the neighbors sign a number of blank pages and forms, which appeared to be search reports. Imran Ezhiev began to tell them that they should fear God and not, under any circumstances, to sign an illegal document. In response, Khamkhoev and other officers dragged Ezhiev through the door, telling him that “you shouldn’t complain about us.” At approximately 19:30, the officers took Khamzat Kuchiev from the office and drove him away in one of their cars. As of 20:24, the search continued.

Imran Ezhiev fears that the powder contained in the jar was an explosive substance planted by the officers. The jar could have been planted during the search or even earlier as the offices had been visited by a large number of strangers, including one militia officer, during the preceding two days. Ezhiev also fears that other forbidden objects could be planted in his living quarters or in those of other staff of the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society, the majority of whom live in the refugee camp near the village of Yandar in the Nazran region of Ingushetia.

From these proceedings, one conclusion can be made immediately: that the internal affairs services of the Republic of Ingushetia have initiated a large-scale provocation with the goal of interfering with the legal activities of the Society for Russian-Chechen Friendship and, on the whole, of discrediting the human rights organizations working in the North Caucasus.

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