

## **Ingush Anger Over Summary Killings**

People in Ingushetia blame a series of extrajudicial killings on security officials from outside their region. People in the North Caucasian republic of Ingushetia have expressed outrage at the killing of a local man, which they say is only the latest in a string of extrajudicial executions they blame on security service agents from outside the autonomous republic.

Early on March 15, a group of armed men in camouflage gear arrived in armoured vehicles to detain Husein Mutaliev, 26, at his house in the town of Malgobek.

Mutaliev's mother, sister and neighbours said they saw him being taken outside the gate of the house and beaten up. They say he attempted to escape, but was shot in the head and fell down. The men then loaded him into one of the vehicles and drove away.

Husein's brother Hasan followed the men in his own car as far as Ingushetia's border with neighbouring North Ossetia. The Ingush traffic police at the frontier checkpoint told him that the armed unit had produced identity cards showing them as agents of Russia's GRU military intelligence, and were allowed to pass.

The local authorities returned Mutaliev's dead body to his family the next day.

He leaves behind a wife and three-month-old baby.

"The masked soldiers broke into our house without a search warrant, they behaved badly and swore. When I asked them who sent them, they answered, laughing, 'Putin sent us'," the dead man's mother Makka Mutalieva told IWPR. "I hope the president will punish them severely for these words... for using his name while committing crimes, doing violence and killing people. Fourteen years of war have already reduced our numbers - when are these arbitrary killings going to end?"

Following the killing, Interfax news agency quoted an official source as saying that Mutaliev had been "destroyed" after putting up armed resistance to an attempt to arrest him. He was, the report alleged, an Islamist militant leader who took part in a bloody raid on Ingushetia in 2004.

Last September, Mutaliev was held in custody for ten days and then released. During that time, he said, security officials beat him and tried to make him confess to being a terrorist.

Other officials in Ingushetia have defended the dead man and said they were concerned at what had happened. An interior ministry source in Ingushetia's Malgobek district questioned the official version of events, saying Mutaliev was not listed as wanted by the Russian or local authorities, and had no criminal record. He was not a member of an illegal armed group, nor did he maintain links with armed militants, the source said.

Ingushetia's prosecution service is treating the killing as a crime. It launched a criminal case several hours after Mutaliev was detained, and later passed the case to the Russian prosecutor for the Southern Federal

District, which covers the whole of the North Caucasus.

“This is an exceptional event, a murder for no reason,” a source in the Ingush prosecutor’s office told IWPR.

Ingush president Murat Zyazikov gave his law-enforcement agencies a severe scolding to his law-enforcers, ordering both the chief prosecutor and interior minister to prevent such incidents from occurring in future. He said traffic police should record cases of security officers coming into Ingushetia from elsewhere, and report them to the interior minister.

Ingushetia used to be much more peaceful than its troubled eastern neighbour Chechnya, but in recent years it has seen an upsurge in violence.

Within Ingushetia, there is common agreement that the men who killed Mutaliev came from outside - almost certainly from North Ossetia, a neighbour with which the republic has strained relations.

Ingushetia does not have its own detention centre for suspected militants, so detainees are taken to Vladikavaz in North Ossetia. Detainees have complained of being beaten and tortured there.

Makka Mutalieva said the men who took her son talked to each other in Ossetian as well as Russian.

A source in Ingush law enforcement told IWPR that the unit involved in the incident consisted of a mix of North Ossetian police, policemen assigned from other parts of Russia, and officers of the FSB security service.

Spokesmen for the interior ministry and FSB in North Ossetia refused to comment.

Ruslan Badalov, who heads an Ingushetia-based human rights group called the Chechen Committee for National Salvation, commented, “Russia has banned the death penalty, but these extrajudicial executions show that de facto it hasn’t been abolished, and this is glaringly obvious in the North Caucasus.”

There have been a number of similar incidents in Ingushetia recently.

On February 7, security services killed two men, Ibragim Gardanov and Magomed Chakhkiev. The two were shot in the centre of Ingushetia’s main city Nazran in full view of many witnesses, and the case sparked widespread anger.

The following day, the press service of the local FSB said it had trapped two men it described as “bandits” suspected of a number of serious crimes.

Witnesses tell a different story. They say at least ten armed men swooped on Gardanov’s car, opened all four doors and started firing at the two men inside without giving a warning. Gardanov was hit by 17

bullets, while Chakhkiev received 24. To make sure the two men were dead, the attackers shot them in the head.

For several hours after the shooting, FSB agents kept the scene sealed off. Many witnesses, including Ingush law-enforcement officers, said the two men in the car could have been captured alive.

Gardanov was well-known locally as a folk healer. His uncle Ahmed, himself a famous herbalist, said he could have accepted seeing his nephew arrested, tried and even executed if he were found guilty.

“But they shoot down our young people like partridges,” he said. “We won’t be game-birds for hunters from the Russian security services.”

Gardanov’s brother Jamaldin said officials in the prosecutor’s office had been sympathetic in private, but said there was nothing they could do. They encouraged him to prove that the dead men were not terrorists.

“So instead of the special services having to prove they are terrorists, we ordinary citizens have to prove that our people are not terrorists after they’ve already been killed,” said Jamaldin Gardanov angrily.

“It’s painful to realise that we won’t find justice in the country of which we are citizens, and that if we are to punish the criminals who killed my brother and his companion, we will have to pursue the truth in international courts.

“They can try to prove that Ibragim was a terrorist, but we know that he wasn’t.”

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**Location:** Caucasus  
Stavropol  
South Ossetia  
Russia

**Focus:** Caucasus

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**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ingush-anger-over-summary-killings>