

Prosecutor General
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Dear Prosecutor General,

I am gravely concerned about the arbitrary detention of twenty-year-old Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev who has just turned 18. According to the Russian LGBT Network, they were detained by police at a flat in Nizhnii Novgorod, in an abduction-style operation, on 4 February 2020, and forcibly transferred to Gudermes, Chechnya. There, they were questioned as witnesses and nominally released, only to be arrested and taken away immediately after, first to the village of Sernovodskoe and then to the town of Urus-Martan. On 9 February, an Urus-Martan court ordered their remand as persons suspected of "aiding and abetting an illegal armed group". The court's decision (upheld on 20 February by the Supreme Court of Chechnya) was issued without informing their lawyers or family members despite Ismail Isaev still being a minor at that time. They were only allowed to see their lawyers in mid-March, in the Grozny pre-trial detention facility SIZO-2. They complained about their ill-treatment and multiple violations of fair trial guarantees, including being forced to sign a "confession" and to refuse the services of the lawyer of their choice.

Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev are being prosecuted solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression, including in connection with their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. They had already suffered unlawful deprivation of liberty and alleged torture and other ill-treatment at the hands of the Chechen authorities back in March 2020, when they were arbitrarily detained by the Chechen police and unlawfully held in secret detention. They are at further risk of torture and other ill-treatment and face up to 15 years in jail on fabricated charges.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Take urgent steps to ensure the immediate release of Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isaev, and an end to their unfounded criminal prosecution;
- Ensure that, while they are in detention, they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and have immediate and unimpeded access to a lawyer of their choice and that their human rights are fully respected, in accordance with Russia's obligations under international law.

Yours sincerely,