



CHECHNYA PEACE FORUM

FAQS

Isn't there already peace in Chechnya?

Under Putin the Kremlin has long argued that the war in Chechnya is over and that it is effectively engaged in "mopping up" operations. Moscow imposed president Ramzan Kadyrov claims that Chechnya is the "most peaceful place in Russia". However, reports by human rights campaigners and journalists suggest that this so-called peace –comes at a very high price. Disappearances, torture, rape and extra-judicial killings - whether carried out by Russian forces or Ramzan Kadyrov's militia –remain common occurrences. So whilst the carpet bombing by Russian forces may be over, human rights abuses continue.

Is there rule of law in Chechnya?

Through intimidation and oppression Ramzan Kadyrov and his personal militia – the Kadyrovtsy – have brought a certain level of order to Chechnya's urban areas. For the average Chechen there are no avenues available to seek justice for the daily crimes against civilians.

When and why did the trouble start?

Chechnya has a long history of external interference and suffering. The most recent conflict and instability can be traced back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the political vacuum left in its wake. Both of Russia's post-Soviet Presidents, Yeltsin and Putin, have exacerbated the situation with their attempts to reassert control and influence over the region.

Aren't all Chechen rebels Islamic fundamentalist terrorists?

This is a common misconception of the Chechen struggle and one which has been propagated by a small number of extremists who sought to subvert Chechnya's genuine cause for independence. President Putin used these false allegations as the basis to justify his bloody reoccupation of the region in 1999. Intent on hiding behind the so-called "war on terror" Putin and the Russian propaganda machine represent Chechnya to the rest of the world as a "centre of international Islamic extremism" expecting the West to turn a blind eye to what he is doing on Europe's doorstep.



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Are NGOs active in Chechnya?

Some NGOs are active in Chechnya but their work is made very difficult by the Kremlin and pro-Russian Chechen forces. A new law on NGOs allows for unprecedented government interference, and the government has used lawsuits and administrative measures to harass and intimidate NGOs that work on such sensitive issues as Chechnya.

Is it easy for journalists to write about Chechnya?

Aside from the glossy billboards popping up around Grozny the sad truth is getting an accurate picture of what is really going on in Chechnya is very difficult. The Kremlin has made reporting from there extraordinarily difficult for Western reporters, and most Russian reporters are too afraid of incurring the Kremlin's wrath to venture there. Russian Investigative Journalist Anna Politkovskaya who was an outspoken critic of human rights abuses in Chechnya was murdered in October 2006

Why is Chechnya so important to Russia/Putin?

Chechnya's struggle for greater independence from Moscow is seen as pivotal to similar struggles for independence by Russia's peripheral territories. If it achieves independence it may start a domino effect leading to the eventual break up of Russia.

What does the future hold for Chechnya?

The Russian government has successfully pushed the issue of Chechnya to the periphery of both domestic and international affairs. Unless Western governments stop ignoring the well-documented human rights abuses in Chechnya the suffering and marginalisation of the Chechen people is likely to continue.



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Why do Chechens want independence?

Chechnya has a long and bloody history of interference at the hands of Russia - under the Tsars, the Soviet Union and the post soviet government's of Yeltsin and Putin. An independent state, Chechens have come to believe, is the only guarantee they can have of protection against genocide and of safety and human rights. The suffering they have endured over the last 17 years only strengthens their case.

When was the last election in Chechnya?

The last legitimate and internationally recognised election in Chechnya took place in 1997 when Aslan Maskhadov was elected president. By contrast the parliamentary elections in November 2005 which saw the pro-Kremlin United Russia party win over half the seats were widely dubbed as a charade. Human rights groups criticized the conduct of the 2005 parliamentary elections as unfairly influenced by the central Russian government and military. The current President, Ramzan Kadyrov is not an elected official. He has been appointed President of Chechnya by the President of Russia. There will only be peace if the Chechens themselves can elect their own political administration. Because of the prevailing state of emergency, elections must take place under the independent observation of the international community.