



CHECHNYA PEACE FORUM

07-05-08

Letter published in The Guardian

Chechnya will be the test for Medvedev

In the painful saga of Chechnya and the Caucasus, President Medvedev's predecessor Vladimir Putin used an unyielding position to establish his domestic standing on the back of atrocities in the region. We call on the new president of Russia to implement the following five-point plan for Chechnya. First, to end the war, torture and suffering in the region. Second, to ensure the defence of human rights and the rule of law. Third, to permit a free and open media to cover events on the ground. Fourth, to allow the voice of political opponents to be heard, not suffocated, and permit unrestricted access of humanitarian organisations to Chechnya. Fifth, to implement democracy in Chechnya and promote self-determination by organising the first free and fair elections in more than a decade, under the close scrutiny of independent observers.

Public opinion across the world will inevitably judge the new president on his commitment to reintroduce civil liberties and human rights in Russia. His actions in Chechnya will be a litmus test of his humanity and morality, and will indicate whether we are in fact seeing the emergence of a new Russia. The rule of law, peace and human rights in Chechnya can only be achieved if the Chechens' right to self-determination is recognised through free and fair elections. By allowing elections to take place, President Medvedev will help end the Chechen people's struggle, establish stability in the Caucasus and restore Russian dignity.

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