



Occasional Paper #26

WAR AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION
IN CHECHNYA

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Occasional Papers is a series published by

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CONTENTS

Preface	v
Executive Summary	ix
Acronyms	xiii
Map of Chechnya	xv
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Context for Humanitarian Action	11
Chapter 2: The Humanitarian Response	49
Chapter 3: Conclusions and Recommendations	73
Endnotes	83
Appendix I: Chronology, October 1991-August 1996	93
Appendix II: Persons Interviewed	97
Appendix III: For Further Reading	101
About the Humanitarianism and War Project and the Authors	103
About the Organization	106

PREFACE

A hallmark of the Humanitarianism and War Project has been the analytical ground broken in its research and publications. Our 1990 case study of Operation Lifeline Sudan reviewed the successful negotiation of humanitarian access and the resulting aid activities, exploring the possibility that in other conflicts, too, access could be consensual. Our 1992 case study of the Persian Gulf examined the use of military force against Iraq to ensure access to civilian populations in desperate need of assistance. Our case studies on Central America and Cambodia in 1992 and Yugoslavia in 1993 highlighted the connections, both positive and negative, between humanitarian action and conflict resolution.

In subsequent studies of humanitarian activities in places such as Liberia and Haiti, the innovative element has been our examination, not of humanitarian activities in their own right but rather of the synergy, or lack thereof, between humanitarian and international political-military actors. More recent works on Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh have reviewed the special challenges posed by the unfamiliar terrain of post-Soviet space. Although a growing number of humanitarian organizations are operating in the Newly Independent States—or what Russians call the “near abroad”—analytical reviews such as ours remain relatively few and far between.

This case study on Chechnya offers the first detailed review of international humanitarian action in the internecine Chechen war. Our colleagues Greg Hansen and Robert Seely examine the background and evolution of the humanitarian challenges in the region and the largely ineffectual outside response to the suffering. The study analyzes how much humanitarian action has been circumscribed and marginalized by the war and by political sensitivities that have muted criticism of the Russian Federation. Published almost two years into the conflict—the continuation of which haunts the new administration of President Boris Yeltsin—the study confirms that research, like humanitarian action, has been a casualty of the war.

Indeed, this publication was delayed by the events it analyzes and the politics that surround them. We began dis-

cussions with Hansen and Seely in the latter part of 1995, deciding in December to commission a trip to the North Caucasus. It was not until April 1996 that the trip could be arranged. We wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development in Moscow, which put together a delegation that Hansen and Seely accompanied. We express thanks also to humanitarian organizations that extended logistical assistance and shared insights and concerns with the researchers. The core of this review comprises some 50 interviews with international and other actors, together with the fruits of ongoing monitoring of events in the region. Given the sensitivity of the information and the exposure of those involved, those quoted are not identified by name.

This study characterizes the Chechnya conflict, now taking its place in the sequence of major post-Cold War political and humanitarian crises, as a war without humanitarian pretensions. The conflict comes at a time when the heady optimism generated by international intervention in support of civilian populations in Iraq has given way to the more sober realization, in the wake of experiences in Somalia and Bosnia, of the complexities faced by the international community in sustaining humane values in times of war. Although the intervention in Haiti falls momentarily on the plus side of the ledger, the broader trend—and the reading by policymakers of it—may prove to be more negative. In reality, the continuation of the war and the deaths of an estimated 30,000-40,000 civilians in the Chechnya conflict have also shattered humanitarian pretensions by the outside world. The absence of consistent and meaningful diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation suggests a return to Cold War days when treatment by governments of “their” populations was beyond international challenge and the rights of sovereign states were largely untempered by their responsibilities.

It is noteworthy that this well-crafted report devotes far more space to the cultural, political, and military context and the major events in the conflict than it gives to humanitarian action. Its lead recommendations concern not humanitarian activities but security. The implicit message to those of us that have a special interest in humanitarian matters is that we need

to spend a great deal more time familiarizing ourselves with the political lay of the land. Indeed, one of the key lessons is that successful humanitarian action in such circumstances requires consummate political acumen by humanitarian actors and energetic political support by states. This study is a step in that direction.

Some readers are familiar with the “Interim Report” of April 30 that provided preliminary findings and conclusions by our consultants. Given the continually evolving crisis and the lack of information and analysis otherwise available, we believed that publishing an overview at the earliest possible moment was imperative. As indicated in the text, Hansen and Seely have incorporated into their finished study reactions received to the interim report along with additional analyses and interviews carried out during the period between May and mid-August. Although this study draws the curtain down as of August 1996, it provides a framework within which to interpret subsequent developments, including, as we go to press, a tenuous cease-fire negotiated by Alexander Lebed, the former general and presidential contender and now national security advisor. The Interim Report, along with other publications of the Humanitarianism and War Project (including this Occasional Paper) are available on the Internet website identified in Appendix IV.

As with all of our studies, we welcome comments. These assist us in our ongoing monitoring of humanitarian action in Chechnya and beyond.

Larry Minear
Thomas G. Weiss
Co-Directors
Providence, RI
September 1996

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The war in Chechnya has presented unique obstacles to effective humanitarian action. The continued precariousness of the humanitarian effort points to the need to reflect upon the experiences of humanitarian actors in this perilous setting and to identify and clarify lessons to be learned from unfolding events. This report appraises the context and effectiveness of humanitarian action associated with the war in Chechnya and offers several recommendations.

The war occurs in post-Soviet space—that is, in largely unfamiliar territory for the world’s humanitarian and conflict-resolution apparatus. The cultural dynamics, social forces, and historical underpinnings of the conflict emerge on many different levels, adding to the war’s particularity and challenging outside humanitarian and political actors to shape appropriate responses. The prerogatives of sovereign statehood, Russia’s character as a former superpower in transition, aggressive Western guardianship of Russian economic and political reform, electoral politics, and Russian influence in the UN have defined and narrowed the parameters within which those responses have taken shape.

The Chechnya conflict exemplifies warfare conducted without humanitarian pretensions. Serious and repeated violations of humanitarian law and of the rules of war have characterized the behavior of both Russian and separatist forces. Some 30,000 and 40,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed so far; there is little promise for sustainable peace on the horizon.¹ After 21 months, the war has yet to capture and hold international interest in a way that has translated into meaningful action. Although at the time of writing in August 1996, a promising cease-fire agreement has come into effect, it by no means constitutes at this early stage a sustainable peace.

The war in Chechnya has placed enormous pressures on the frontier regions of Ingushetia and Dagestan, which are themselves highly unstable areas. Ingushetia in particular has been a recurrent flash point. There is an acute danger of unresolved conflicts and instability again coming to a head elsewhere in the North Caucasus, notably in the Prigorodnyi region.

Political constraints on independent humanitarian action have been considerable. The UN system, a prominent political and humanitarian actor in other conflicts, is conspicuously absent from Chechnya. UN humanitarian organizations have acquiesced in Russian-imposed restrictions, as well as in other constraints of a political nature, which have barred them from Chechnya and limited them to providing aid to the displaced on the periphery of the conflict. Some NGOs with experience inside Chechnya see the UN's marginalization as diverting attention and funding away from far more pressing needs within an already isolated Chechnya. In the region and on the international stage, the UN's collective response has been reticent. Strong advocacy of humanitarian principles, often a comparative advantage of operational UN agencies, has been virtually non-existent.

The Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has maintained a small Assistance Group in Grozny since June of 1995, allowing it to play a limited role in the political sphere in Chechnya and a more major role in placating Western public opinion. Without the necessary political backstopping of the mission by OSCE member states, however, its operational effectiveness has been handicapped. The Assistance Group has had a negligible impact on the humanitarian situation.

Humanitarian space—circumscribed from the beginning—has been eroding at an alarming pace since the onset of hostilities. Aid agencies have been plagued increasingly by serious security problems. Insecurity and bureaucratic obstructionism have prompted most agencies to withdraw from Chechnya, either quitting Russia altogether or retreating to the neighboring regions of Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and Dagestan.

Throughout the conflict there has been a trend away from meeting assistance and protection needs inside Chechnya and toward dealing with the effects of the war on its periphery. This trend reflects both Russian political interference globally and local constraints on humanitarian activity inside Chechnya. While displaced populations in the neighboring regions have benefited from the increased humanitarian presence there, the voraciousness of the warfare inside Chechnya has

severely constrained attempts to minimize population displacement and provide adequate protection and assistance to civilians in situ. In their efforts to surmount access and other difficulties, virtually all available options have been exhausted by the few agencies that have remained behind.

On an operational level, sometimes contrary approaches have been applied, leading to frictions between agencies and the endangerment of humanitarian programs and personnel. The operating environment for humanitarian action is characterized by suspicion and a generalized lack of awareness of the humanitarian ethos among the recipients of aid, combatants, authorities, and bureaucracy. This lack of understanding often has degenerated into outright hostility. Different interpretations of the need for transparency and the most appropriate means of achieving it have highlighted the comparative advantages of humanitarian agencies in the region and the operational principles they bring to their work.

The heightened need for transparency, even where it carries major risks, also raises the issue of whether traditional allocations of personnel and other resources for advocacy and public education are sufficient for operations in the North Caucasus and the former Soviet Union in general.

Our recommendations are designed to ensure a political-security environment in which effective humanitarian action can take place, to generate additional pressure on Russia to meet its international obligations and commitments, and to promote greater humanitarian presence and more effective humanitarian activities. The major recommendations are:

- increased international pressure on the Russian Federation from national governments and international organizations to uphold international humanitarian law, backed by sanctions in the case of continued noncompliance.
- more creative and insistent efforts directed at all parties to the conflict to provide full and unimpeded access to civilian populations. The issuance and honoring of the requisite travel authorizations to international aid personnel should be paramount.
- a politically and numerically strengthened OSCE presence and, for the Council of Europe (COE), an augmented

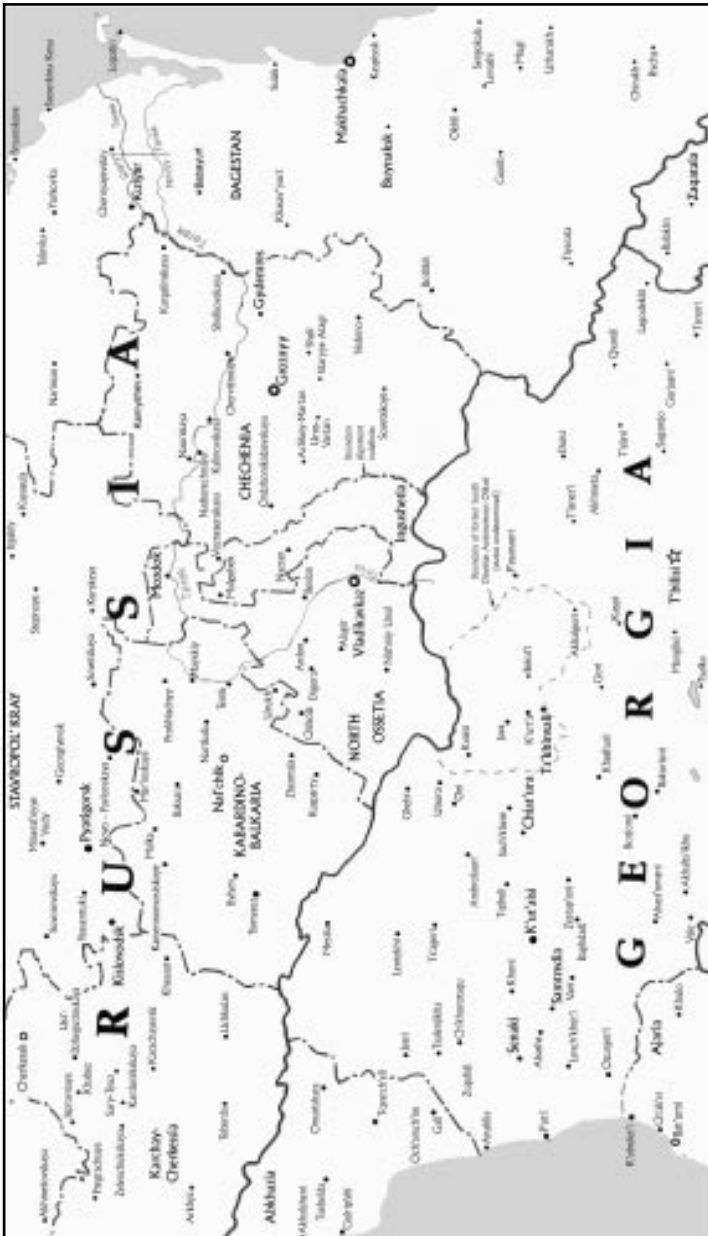
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- human rights monitoring and reporting role in Chechnya.
- more assertive humanitarian diplomacy by the United Nations and its Department of Humanitarian Affairs and substantial presence of UN operational organizations in Chechnya when political and security conditions permit.
 - development of a larger cadre of seasoned professionals with a combination of operational skills, knowledge of the international system, political acumen, and prudence. As the opportunity allows, agencies also should be prepared to provide the extensive administrative, financial, and political backstopping necessary to sustain augmented efforts.
 - increased donor support for the development of indigenous NGOs and for the dissemination of international humanitarian law.

ACRONYMS

AICF	Action Internationale Contre la Faim
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COE	Council of Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMP	Confederation of Mountain Peoples
CNC	Chechen National Congress
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe [now OSCE]
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office [European Union]
EMERCOM	Emergency Situations Ministry [Russian Federation]
FMS	Federal Migration Service [Russian Federation]
FSB	Federalnaya Sluzhba Bezopasnosti [Russian Counterintelligence Service]
FSU	Former Soviet Union
G-7	The Group of Seven Industrialized States
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security]
MDM	Médecins du Monde
MERLIN	Medical Emergency Relief International
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières [Doctors Without Borders]
MVD	Russian Interior Ministry Forces
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NIS	Newly Independent States
OMON	Russian Internal Security Police
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RF	Russian Federation
UN	United Nations

UNDHA	United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

MAP OF CHECHNYA



Map by Gregory Kazarian

INTRODUCTION

*The last year [1995] was, for humanitarian organizations, the year of disillusion. After Rwanda, where genocide was allowed to happen live on TV screens without any reaction from the so-called 'international community', Chechnya now highlights the gap between knowledge and conscience and the fact that the worst may happen in a climate of total impunity.*¹

Humanitarians who have responded to the war in Chechnya have been down a road less-traveled. They have confronted the challenges and complexities of this unfamiliar and eminently hostile environment without significant political support for their efforts from either Russia or abroad. To the contrary, the provision of effective humanitarian assistance and protection *in situ* has been systematically hindered, and at times even blocked, by a combination of Russian obstruction and reluctance among international actors to enter the Chechnya morass.

In the early 1990s, a shift took place which favored a subsidiary status for sovereignty in cases of widespread, life-threatening suffering.² But as an acid test for the influence of the humanitarian imperative as a force in post Cold-War politics, Chechnya provides a sobering reality check. Recent clashes between *Realpolitik* and humanitarianism have seldom resulted in such a one-sided outcome. International acquiescence to the war in Chechnya thus conveys two important lessons. First, it has demonstrated the precariousness of humanitarian efforts when a conflict is regarded as "off-limits" for serious international action. Second, it shows that the global humanitarian system remains ill-prepared to prevent and alleviate human suffering in crises where the rules and dictates of *Realpolitik* reign supreme.

This introduction identifies the defining characteristics of the Chechnya conflict. Chapter 1 tracks the background and evolution of the conflict from its social, cultural, and historical roots until the outbreak of open hostilities in 1994. The little-known but important Prigorodnyi conflict of 1992 and its bearing on later events are also discussed. Events subsequent to the Russian invasion of Chechnya are then evaluated in

terms of the evolving context for humanitarian action. An appraisal of the humanitarian response follows in Chapter 2 and a discussion of conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 3. A chronology of major events is presented in Appendix I, a list of persons interviewed in Appendix II, and suggestions for further reading in Appendix III.

Distinguishing characteristics of the war and their relation to humanitarian action help to put past events and future options into perspective.

The Nature of Warfare in Chechnya

The conduct of the war has been consistently characterized by targeting civilian areas and by the Russian military's excessive use of force. An absence of any tradition in the Russian military of placing limitations on violence has led to the disproportionate use of force in response to attacks by separatist fighters. As the latter have often taken up positions in populated areas of previously unmolested towns and villages, extensive destruction has been inflicted upon civilian residential areas and infrastructure.

Russian counterinsurgency strategy in Chechnya has increasingly placed the responsibility for disarmament and maintaining order and nonbelligerency upon civilians. A pattern has emerged in the war by which towns or villages become encircled by Russian forces and are then issued with ultimatums to turn over specified numbers of fighters and weapons, or face the consequences of collective punishment by shelling, aerial bombardment, and ground attack. Humanitarian agencies are typically barred access to stricken areas until some weeks after their services are most urgently needed.

In interviews conducted for this study, Russian officials indicated that high-level attempts were made to infuse humanitarian principles into the conduct of Russian troops in Chechnya. Acknowledging that violations were nevertheless committed on the front lines, they contrasted the conduct of Russian troops in Chechnya—where, in their view, there was more general understanding of, if not respect for, humanitarian access—with the conduct of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Conceding excessive bombardment by Russian forces, they

pointed out that the insurgents themselves engaged in questionable practices, including the mounting of military operations from within Chechen towns. By their account, Russian diplomats outside the region worked to resolve problems of humanitarian access in individual incidents when contacted by aid agencies.

For their part, separatist fighters have used civilians as human shields often enough to suggest this as a conscious strategy. Given the unrestrained behavior of Russian forces, the predictable reaction is increased reluctance on their part to distinguish civilians from fighters, resulting in the wholesale destruction of civilian areas. Noncombatants are invariably caught in the middle, so that the war has been marked by mass population displacements.

Widespread banditry and looting by individuals and small groups from all quarters, combined with the North Caucasian tradition of blood revenge, have exacerbated matters further. Local understandings and agreements between military forces, as well as formal cease-fires, are threatened by individuals acting on their own initiative in the prevailing climate of lawlessness.

There is an apparent lack of cohesion common to both combatants, with problems of accountability and blurred chains-of-command most pronounced among Russian forces. These attributes, combined with a bewildering array of different units, each with different origins, levels of training, lengths of service, and unclear responsibilities, make it exceedingly difficult to build relationships of mutual trust and to negotiate for access or a humanitarian truce.

Isolation and Marginalization of the Chechnya Conflict on the World Stage

Despite its commitments to international agreements and conventions governing the use of force to quell internal unrest, Russia has continued to act with relative impunity in Chechnya so long as it has been allowed to frame the war strictly as an internal affair consistent with supposedly sovereign prerogatives. The authorities have taken pains to minimize the visibility of the conflict and soften its impact abroad, helping to

prevent it from assuming its rightful place on the international agenda.

Severe limitations on humanitarian access have helped Russia to manage outside perceptions of the war by hiding some of the worst excesses from the public eye. The danger and inconvenience of traveling to Chechnya has meant, with notable exceptions, that journalists have preferred to cover the war from Moscow. Among those who have set foot in the area, many reporters and some aid agencies have paid a high price for criticizing Russian actions, a reaction that has largely suppressed criticism from those quarters. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least ten reporters have been killed while covering the war in Chechnya, some as a result of targeted violence. Seven others are missing.³ As noted in the following section, a growing number of aid workers have lost their lives.

Perception management also has helped Russia to portray Chechens in general and separatist Chechens in particular as criminals, terrorists, or Islamic radicals, reinforcing themes with strong resonance in the West. Outside unfamiliarity with the North Caucasus region has meant that Russian interpretations of events in Chechnya were accepted more readily. For their part, the actions of Chechen separatist forces have been increasingly difficult for international publics to sympathize with, given numerous hostage-takings, attacks on hospitals, the Turkish ferry hijacking, and other attacks on civilian targets.

The result is that Western countries and international organizations, for all practical purposes, have adopted at face value Russia's explanations of its actions in Chechnya. The reasons for this are part of a larger set of political, security, and economic considerations related to Russia as a whole. The Chechnya question commonly has been framed in zero-sum terms by the outside world: *either* act on Chechnya *or* continue constructive engagement with Russia. There has been little discussion of a nuanced approach and even less impetus to act on Chechnya within international organizations whose member states would prefer to keep the issue firmly on the periphery of international debate. The contradictions inherent in aiding Russia's political and economic reform at the expense

of gross human rights violations have been largely side-stepped by the West.

The Security Environment

Chechnya has proved to be an extremely dangerous place for humanitarian workers. The circumstances surrounding the disappearance in April 1995 in Chechnya of American aid specialist Fred Cuny and his team cast a pall over Chechnya in humanitarian circles.⁴ Tragic in its own terms, Cuny's disappearance, which received considerable outside attention, contrasts with a host of other killings that generated no significant international outrage. A Finnish aid worker with IOM was killed in equally disturbing circumstances in December 1995. Six Chechen Red Cross workers were shot and killed while collecting bodies on the streets of Grozny in the first few months of the war. Other aid workers have died in Ingushetia. There have been at least six cases where aid workers have been taken hostage in 1996 alone.

Considerable circumstantial evidence suggests that many such security incidents have been carried out with the implicit or explicit blessing of Russian or Chechen authorities. Although a handful of dedicated expatriate aid workers continue to accept the challenge, the environment breeds a cloak-and-dagger mindset among expatriate personnel. Suspicion and distrust of foreigners by local people, combined with acute sensitivity to criticism from the outside, have made daily threats from banditry, lawlessness, and random violence difficult to cope with. The prevailing insecurity has also undermined transparency, normally the hallmark of humanitarian action.

Coping with such untoward conditions has interfered with strategic planning and placed additional pressures on coordination of humanitarian activity. With distinctions between aid groups lost on combatants and the general public in a setting where there is little familiarity with or respect for humanitarian action, the agencies have taken particular interest in each other's conduct and programming. Meanwhile, hazardous conditions have forced some agencies to leave the humanitarian theater altogether and have prevented others

from initiating activities. Only the highest levels of humanitarian professionalism, political acumen, transparency, communications skill, and outside political support, can help to mitigate these circumstances.

Post-Soviet Space

Over the years, the North Caucasus was a favored laboratory for Soviet social engineering and a venue of chronic underdevelopment. Despite its oil wealth, Chechnya registered near the bottom in a wide range of socioeconomic indicators, including income, investment, and child mortality rates. As a result, the psychological, social, and cultural elements of the post-Soviet environment call for innovative approaches to humanitarian action.

Organized nongovernmental activity is a new notion that has had less of an opportunity to take hold in the North Caucasus than elsewhere in the FSU. There is a generalized expectation that social, economic, and political problems will be solved from above. Local capacities are strong but largely inchoate and seldom reach into the social sphere. Similarly, the absence of nongovernmental humanitarian traditions has resulted in a pervasive lack of awareness of the humanitarian ethos, contributing to confusion, misunderstanding, and distrust regarding the motivations and methods of outside humanitarian agencies and nascent local NGO activity. Outside agencies, themselves largely without much prior involvement in the FSU, thus face a steep learning curve as they adjust to these realities.

The stifling effect of layer upon layer of bureaucracy and the unaccountability of officialdom are other legacies visible in the post-Soviet upheaval. These factors present enormous hurdles to effective humanitarian action. In addition, the intentional manipulation of bureaucracy and authority to obstruct humanitarian efforts represents a further obstacle.

Other Factors

In addition to these four defining characteristics of the Chechnya conflict, several other features are worthy of

mention. North Caucasians tend to be extremely self-sufficient and independent people who are conditioned by culture and history to respond to hardship with alacrity. They are unaccustomed and often disinclined to looking beyond their own capacities for respite. For these reasons, they may be a difficult people to help. But when confronted with a war of such destructive proportions and with combatants acting without humanitarian pretensions, their time-tested survival strategies are of doubtful immediate value.

One of the ironies of this war is that it has victimized many thousands of Russian residents of Chechnya who were often less equipped than their Chechen comrades for dealing with adversity. Many of these victims were elderly and unable to muster the resources to leave the afflicted areas. Lacking the strong ties of clan and kinship that have helped to sustain the ethnic-Chechen majority, they often bore the brunt of the worst excesses of the Russian military and Chechen separatist provocations.

The war in Chechnya is not easily explained in ethnic terms, a factor that sets it apart somewhat from other post-Soviet conflicts. Officially engendered Russian racism toward Caucasians helps explain how Russian forces were mobilized in December 1994. Meanwhile, elements of the Chechen separatist leadership can be equally strident and uncompromising toward any future relationship with Russians. On the ground in Chechnya, however, there is a surprising lack of animosity between Russian and Chechen noncombatants. During our own visit to the region in April 1996, we watched women from the Moscow-based Soldier's Mothers' Committee, some of whom had lost sons in the war, commiserate with Chechen women who had been displaced by the war. The depth of identity-based mutual fear and animosity that is now apparently typical of Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia, for example, is lacking. Among Chechens, animosity tends to be directed at official Russia and its military machine rather than at the individual Russians living in their midst.

The war in Chechnya is post-modern as the causes of events follow an often indiscernible script and are not always as they appear. As with other internal conflicts in the region, local motivations for and against violence are obscured and

complicated by countless layers of subterfuge. In Chechnya, ownership of the war belongs to its official and unofficial sponsors, be they political, economic, or criminal. The rationale for violence between Russian and Chechen forces and among Chechens themselves—as also for violence directed against humanitarian actors—varies from place to place and has shifted unpredictably according to changes in local conditions. Even while fighting has raged elsewhere, periods of stasis occasionally have emerged between combatant formations in which Russian soldiers and Chechen fighters have joined forces—sometimes for crime, sometimes for collusion, sometimes for lunch.

Although it would be a mistake to overestimate the ease with which some form of reconciliation may emerge, prospects for reconciliation dim as the war continues. One price being paid for outside acquiescence in the war is a hardening of attitudes among the people in the region. It will become increasingly difficult for Chechens and others in the North Caucasus to avoid further radicalization as long as the war continues. The implications for a genuine, long-term settlement to the conflict are obvious: the longer the war remains unchecked and the more civilians who remain unprotected from its effects, the more intractable the conflict will prove. A war that started as something other than an ethnic conflict may soon turn into one.

We regard this study of war and humanitarian action in Chechnya as a work-in-progress. We hope that the issues it examines will soon require revisiting once the political will is found to pursue a more principled and genuine international effort to intercede in the conflict. Our present findings are based on a visit to Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and Moscow in April 1996. Following our return, an interim report with preliminary findings and recommendations was circulated. The comments it elicited, as well as those from numerous subsequent interviews, were incorporated in this study.

Consistent with other case studies conducted by the Humanitarianism and War Project, we have endeavored to give humanitarians and others involved in the conflict a major voice, making our own views as unobtrusive as possible. We

do, however, accept all responsibility for any errors and misjudgments that may be contained herein.

We have striven for balance in this study and, consistent with the need for objectivity, have taken a neutral position on the question of the territorial status of Chechnya. At the same time, the study is informed by a recognition of the rights and responsibilities of the Russian Federation as a state actor in the conflict and signatory to international conventions and protocols governing the use of force and the treatment of civilian populations. We accept the conclusions of reputable human rights organizations that neither Russian nor separatist forces have met their obligations toward civilian populations. On balance, however, although separatist forces have their own obligations, Russia must bear a larger share of the burden for exercising restraint, given its greater military capacities and activity and its recent commitments to the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and other international organizations and conventions.

CHAPTER 1
THE CONTEXT FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

This chapter reviews the background to the war in Chechnya, retracing the history of the region during its pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet days. It also examines the foreground provided by the war itself, which is divided into five periods, each with implications for humanitarian action. The background and foreground provide the context for the humanitarian activities reviewed in Chapter 2.

Background

On December 11, 1994, Russian Defense and Interior Ministry forces invaded the small but rebellious North Caucasian territory of Chechnya, which had unilaterally declared its independence from the Russian Federation in 1991. The war is the most recent manifestation of Russia and Chechnya's historical failure to arrive at a workable *modus vivendi*. At the same time, virtually the entire North Caucasus region is a study in the long-term effects of forced migration.¹ The legacy of 70 years of sometimes brutal Soviet social engineering and the socioeconomic ills of post-Soviet upheaval compound the difficulties of this isolated region.

Land and People

The North Caucasus is part of the Caucasian mountain range. The region to which the mountains give their name run, east to west, from the Caspian to the Black Seas and, north to south, from the Russian steppe to the Iranian border. The region is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse in the world, comprising over 30 languages and ethnic groups.

Landlocked Chechnya, formerly the bulk of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), is situated among three autonomous republics of the Russian Federation: Ingushetia and North Ossetia to the west, and Dagestan to the east. Russia lies to the north, and Georgia to the south on the other side of the Caucasian peaks. Chechnya consists of two distinct geographic parts: a low fertile plain that extends

into the Stavropol region of Russia, and a range of foothills that rise into the southern range of the Caucasus mountains. The foothills begin about 10 miles south of Grozny, the Chechen capital.

Before the war most Chechens earned their living in agriculture, either on collective farms on the plains or in grazing/subsistence farming in the foothills. Chechnya has reserves of high-grade oil deposits suitable for quality aviation fuels and lubricants, as well as natural gas. Pipelines for transporting oil north into the Russian heartland from Azerbaijan also pass through Chechnya. In recent years Russia has indicated plans to build a new pipeline through Chechnya carrying oil from the Caspian Sea to ports on the Black Sea coast.

A 1989 census put the population of the districts now considered part of Chechnya at 1,084,000 people, including 715,000 Chechens, 269,000 Russians (including Cossacks), and 25,000 Ingush. In the three districts now comprising Ingushetia, there were 19,000 Chechens and approximately 200,000 Ingush.² Grozny had a population in 1989 of 397,000 of whom 210,000 were ethnic Russians.

Chechens and Ingush, who together comprise the *Vainakh*, are ethnically related and share a similar language. Chechens practice a form of Sunni Islam with a Sufi influence, although years of Soviet religious repression have undermined Islamic spirituality in all but the elderly and alienated the often-marginal Muslim clergy from the people. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Islam.

Traditional social organization among Chechens is patriarchal, clan-based, and lateral, as distinct from hierarchical, due to the absence of feudalism in Chechen history. Decisionmaking and conflict resolution are traditionally the province of clan elders who may form coalitions of convenience or participate in councils with other clans. Cut off from the outside world for most of its history, Chechens have no experience of modern democratic politics.

Chechens whose origins are in the mountainous south see themselves more as the guardians of Chechen identity and honor than their counterparts from the plains to the North. Northern Chechens, by virtue of their greater physical

vulnerability to Russian force and influence, have historically been more amenable to Russian presence and Russian masters. Geographical and clan cleavages thus form the basis for political divisions inside Chechnya.

The Russian-Chechen Conflict Prior to the Russian Revolution

For the past two centuries, Chechnya's history has been defined largely by Russian and Soviet attempts to subdue the Caucasus. In the late eighteenth century, Russia expanded into the northern and southern Caucasus, annexing Georgia in 1801. However, large mountainous tracts between Russia's empire in the Caucasus and the Russian steppe remained outside of Russian control. Russian generals feared their position in the Caucasus could be threatened as long as the mountain regions remained unconquered and that the islands of independence in the mountains would be used by the Ottoman and Persian empires as Russia's Achilles' heel. From the second decade of the nineteenth century, Russian armies began their push into the mountains to subdue the Chechens and other mountain peoples.

In the nineteenth century Russian literature of Lermontov, Pushkin, and Tolstoy, the mountaineers were perceived as savage romantics, tamed by Russian soldiery. In the minds of many Russians, the wars in the Caucasus "...assumed a place in the Russian imagination parallel to the position of the Kyber Pass and the northwest frontiers of colonial India for the British."³

Among Chechens, existing warrior traditions were adapted to meet the new and incessant threats from the north. For more than 25 years in the 1800s, Imam Shamil, an ethnic *Avar* from Dagestan, led Chechens in an organized, Islamicized, and bloody campaign of resistance against numerically superior and better armed Russian forces. Russian generals were prompted to adopt harsh scorched-earth policies, aimed at undermining the ability of the Chechens to wage war by destroying the villages and lands that gave them sustenance. The Chechens were forced off the plains and higher into the mountains by Cossack forces employed by the Russians. Despite a titular military victory with the capture of Shamil in

1859 that ended the wide-scale, coordinated rebellion against Russian rule, local uprisings remained common. Between 1859 and 1877, there were 18 recorded revolts. Skirmishing continued into the twentieth century.

The Soviet Era

After the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917, the Bolsheviks promised Chechnya independence, cultural autonomy, and religious freedom. The mountaineers of the North Caucasus formed their own republic but succumbed to anti-Bolshevik forces and ultimately the Red Army. After the Soviet victory, a Congress of Mountaineers convened in January 1921 at Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, where the Soviet Socialist Autonomous Mountain Republic was created. Chechens, Ingush, Ossetians, and the smaller nations in the North Caucasus submitted to Soviet rule in exchange for assurances of full autonomy in domestic affairs, the return of lands seized by the Russians, and the enshrinement of the Islamic *Sharia* as the foundation of local law.

The new arrangement was in effect for only a few years before Chechnya was cleaved from the Mountain Republic and given autonomous *oblast* status within Russia. Forced collectivization and attempts at Russification led to renewed unrest and rebellion. In 1934, Chechnya was united with Ingushetia and together they were elevated to the status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR). Rebellion continued throughout the 1930s, a period of forced famine, mass arrests, exiles, and killings.

With the advent of the “Great Patriotic War,” World War II, Chechen anti-Soviet guerrillas mounted attacks against Soviet forces as the German army advanced into the Caucasus. Most Caucasian males, however, served in the Soviet Red Army, many with distinction.

Deportation

In their attitudes toward Russian political and military power, Chechens have been conditioned heavily by the memory of the Stalinist deportation of 1944. As Shamil’s rebellion

against Russian rule epitomized the nineteenth century for Chechens, so the deportation was the key twentieth century event in shaping Chechen identity.

To punish the “unreliable” ethnic groups of the North Caucasus, Stalin ordered the deportation of Chechens and five other ethnic groups in February 1943. The deportations began with the mass exile of the Karachai the following winter. In February 1944, every Chechen and Ingush found in the republic was rounded up and forcibly deported, with great loss of life. The Ossetians, who had historically enjoyed a close relationship with Russia, were spared. Most Chechens and Ingush were sent to central Asia. The Chechen-Ingush ASSR was dissolved and the lands divided up among Russians, the Laks of Dagestan, and North Ossetians.⁴ A one-year old Chechen, Dzokhar Dudayev, was one of the deportees.

The effect of the deportations was to sabotage Chechen and other societies of the North Caucasus for years to come. Caucasian criminal bands became more powerful after World War II, partly due to the deportations that ensured that Chechens viewed authority with suspicion and disdain. Those who made their living in exile as seasonal, transient laborers were able to forge contacts in many cities across the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, an entire generation was consigned to educational neglect, helping to explain why Chechnya would be an economic underdog for many years, despite its relatively rich resource base. According to Suzanne Goldenberg, the years in exile had profound social repercussions:

For Chechens, the struggle with Russia is firmly in the present. The deportations are marked in Grozny as an official holiday. Schools and offices are closed, and television broadcasts are given over to live coverage of a memorial service. But although the deportations have ceased to occupy such a central place on the Chechen political agenda, they have of course inflicted the same hindrances. The lack of educational and other opportunities for the generation of governing age is felt deeply.⁵

Rehabilitation and Perestroika

After Khrushchev came to power, cursory attempts were made to undo some of Stalin's worst excesses. A decree in early 1957 legalized the restoration of the dissolved territories of the North Caucasus and the return of the deportees. The ensuing return of deportees between 1957 and 1960 was badly managed, prompting confrontations between returnees and the newly-resident occupants of what were formerly Chechen and Ingush lands. Many returnees were denied resettlement on land that had been confiscated.

The advent of *perestroika* in the late 1980s prompted many of the non-Russian nationalities in the USSR to question the official history of the Soviet Union. Cultural groups that campaigned for the truth about the deportations and new language rights transformed into full-blown independence movements.

Embarking on a more enlightened policy toward the North Caucasus, the Soviet government allowed a Chechen administrator, Doku Zavgayev, to head Grozny's Supreme Soviet. At the same time, however, the Confederation of Mountain Peoples (CMP) was formed as an expression of North Caucasian national will. The organization was given impetus by Dzokhar Dudayev, a Chechen who had become a public figure when, as commander of a Soviet air force installation in Estonia, he refused to sanction the use of force against Estonian aspirations of secession from the Soviet Union in 1989.

In its formative stages, the CMP showed signs of becoming the foundation for a supranational government for the region. Attempts were made to empower the body into a force for regional representation and conflict resolution for the nations of the North Caucasus, based loosely on the council of elders that existed for dispute settlement before the Russian incursion into the area under the czars. But the CMP's constructive potential was soon squandered by internal feuding, alleged Mafia links, and KGB infiltration, as well as by military adventures such as the Abkhaz-Georgian conflict, in which its structure was used to send a military expedition to fight on behalf of the Abkhaz. A Chechen battalion under the command

of Shamil Basayev, later a leading figure in the Chechnya war, was one group that fought in the Abkhaz capital of Sukhumi.

Dudayev quickly assumed the role of nationalist figure-head in Chechnya as Moscow's grip on its nether regions became more tenuous. The Chechen National Congress (CNC) was formed in November 1990, with Dudayev as chairman of its executive committee. Shortly thereafter, the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR adopted a "Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Chechen-Ingush Republic" under pressure from the CNC. Moscow did not react unduly to the measure since it fell short of a unilateral declaration of independence. Under Dudayev, however, the CNC became more strident in its calls for complete sovereignty from the USSR and from Russia.

Unilateral Secession

Following the attempted coup against Gorbachev in 1991 and the dismantling of the USSR, Dudayev initially voiced support for new Russian President Boris Yeltsin and lambasted Zavgayev for failing to denounce the coup attempt in Moscow. As leader of the CNC, Dudayev stepped up the pressure on Zavgayev's Chechen-Ingush Supreme Soviet, calling for a general strike and a transfer of power to his executive council.

The strike in Chechnya lasted ten weeks and quickly turned violent. Yeltsin and Ruslan Khasbulatov, the ethnic-Chechen speaker of the Federal Parliament, made it clear that the separatist aspirations of numerically small nations would not be tolerated. Dudayev's armed backers eventually toppled Zavgayev after seizing key government buildings, television stations, and Grozny airport.

Zavgayev was forced to step aside on September 15, 1991, making way for a provisional council. Dudayev, however, declared that his own executive council was in charge in Grozny. Moscow replied with a resolution on October 8 that condemned illegal armed formations, called for their disarmament, and urged that elections be held on the basis of existing law. On October 19, Yeltsin issued an ultimatum to Chechnya to submit to the terms of the October 8 resolution within three days.

The move incited fear in Chechens who recalled the repression of the Soviet years. Dudayev played on these fears by announcing the formation of the Chechen National Guard and a general mobilization. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on October 27 despite threats from Moscow, and amid accusations of unfair electoral practices, Dudayev claimed 85 percent of the vote.⁶ A week later, on November 2, he declared an independent Chechen Republic Ichkeria.

The election was dismissed by Moscow and by Chechen opposition groups. On November 7, Yeltsin decreed a state of emergency in Chechnya. Dudayev imposed martial law and blocked the deployment of Russian troops flown to Grozny airport. Soon after, the Russian parliament refused to ratify Yeltsin's state of emergency decree, due in part to its fresh memories of tanks in the streets of Moscow during the abortive coup attempt and its unwillingness to see military force again employed in a domestic political dispute. The Russian troops were withdrawn.

Ingushetia and Prigorodnyi Raion

Chechnya's secessionist rumblings created a dilemma for Ingushetia, one that could be manipulated by Moscow to further isolate Chechnya. The primary preoccupation of Ingushetia in 1991 was its claim on Prigorodnyi Raion. Prigorodnyi had been turned over to North Ossetia upon the dissolution of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR and deportations in 1944 but was retained by the Ossetians following the ASSR's reconstitution in 1957. Prior to the deportations, the population of Prigorodnyi was 90 percent Ingush.⁷

Administrative and practical obstacles, many of them engineered by the North Ossetian authorities, prevented many Ingush from returning to their homes in Prigorodnyi. Ossetian-Ingush tensions rose steadily in the 1970s and 1980s. Reflecting the larger nationalities questions emerging throughout the faltering Soviet Union, intercommunal unrest came to a head with the advent of *perestroika*. The years 1990 and 1991 were marked by mass Ingush demonstrations demanding Prigorodnyi's return, while counter demonstrations were organized by Ossetians. Most demonstrations were peaceful.

In response to growing unrest in the region, the North Ossetian ASSR declared a state of emergency in Prigorodnyi in April 1991. Russia reciprocated by sending 1,500 Interior Ministry troops to the region. But intercommunal violence rose steadily. On April 26, 1991, in the last months of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation Supreme Soviet, then in a battle for power with the Soviet authorities, passed the "Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples," which promised a return to pre-deportation boundaries. The law raised Ingush expectations and bought Moscow time, but no concrete mechanisms for the law's implementation were spelled out. The Ingush believed that the Russian Federation's parliament, and Russian President Boris Yeltsin, would help them to reclaim Prigorodnyi. The Ossetians sided with conservatives in the Soviet government.

By this time a movement had formed in Ingushetia to press for the creation of an autonomous Ingush republic. Events in Grozny gave the movement impetus as the CNC pressed harder for Chechnya's complete independence from Moscow. Ingushetia was caught in the middle. It wanted to secure the return of Prigorodnyi, which could best be achieved through the intervention of Moscow. At the same time, the Ingush were intimately connected to the Chechens with whom they shared a common ethnic, linguistic, and historical heritage, but who were becoming more openly antagonistic toward the central government. The unfolding of events in Prigorodnyi would later cause a humanitarian crisis that would bear on Ingushetia's reactions to the war in Chechnya.

The 1992 Ingush-Ossetian Conflict in Prigorodnyi

The Ingush, fearing that their intimate connections with the Chechens would cost them Prigorodnyi, opted to remain in Russia in the hope that Moscow would act on its promise to restore Ingush territory to pre-1944 boundaries. The three primarily Ingush regions in the west of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR voted in a referendum on November 30, 1991, to go it alone, and on June 4, 1992, the Russian parliament recognized the Republic of Ingushetia as a legal entity within the Russian Federation.

Tensions in Prigorodnyi increased sharply when refugees from the fighting in and around the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast (SOAO) in newly-independent Georgia fled to North Ossetia.⁸ Traumatized by their own experiences of forced flight, some 16,000 South Ossetians landed in Prigorodnyi Raion. Some of the worst cases of violence, intimidation, and forced eviction against the Ingush were at the hands of South Ossetian refugees, possibly on instigation from Vladikavkaz, capital of North Ossetia. In some cases, North Ossetian locals protected Ingush from South Ossetian refugees.⁹

With all power and authority structures of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR in Grozny, Ingushetia was left without a leader, legitimate government, or defined borders with Chechnya.¹⁰ Violence in Prigorodnyi increased amid accusations that both sides were arming themselves: the Ingush received weapons through Chechnya, Ossetians from South Ossetia. In North Ossetia, paramilitaries were incorporated into the security forces. The smoldering conflict turned hot in October 1992.

Fighting in Prigorodnyi lasted in earnest for about one week, although serious damage was inflicted in that short time. Nearly 500 people, the majority of whom were Ingush, were killed. Thousands of homes, again mostly Ingush, were destroyed. Russian Interior Ministry and army units, ostensibly sent to the region to keep the peace, actively participated alongside Ossetians in attacks against the Ingush of Prigorodnyi, and often even led assaults.¹¹

By the end of the week, most of the 34,500-64,000 Ingush living in Prigorodnyi and the rest of North Ossetia were forcibly displaced to Ingushetia where the vast majority remain. Several thousand others found refuge in Chechnya. Ingush authorities claim 64,000 Ingush were forced to flee, while the Russian Federal Migration Service puts the number at a more conservative 46,000. North Ossetian authorities claim 9,000 Ossetians were forced out of Prigorodnyi, most of whom have returned.¹² Only a handful of Ingush had returned to Prigorodnyi as of early 1996.

Chechnya 1991-1994

In Chechnya, the years following Dudayev's declaration of independence were fraught with all of the pervasive socio-economic ills brought on by the Soviet Union's collapse. Dudayev insisted that Chechnya be dealt with on equal terms by Moscow but failed to consolidate his leadership and maintain law and order. An increasingly fragmented and unstable territory hardened attitudes in Moscow and made the prospect of Russian intervention both more likely and more palatable for Russia.

Although they were encouraged officially to stay, deteriorating conditions in Chechnya sparked an exodus of ethnic Slavs, many of whom held key jobs in the oil industry and infrastructure of Chechnya. Between the last Soviet census in 1989 and the outbreak of war in December 1994, more than 100,000 ethnic Slavs, mostly from Grozny where they had been in the majority, are thought to have left.¹³ Many of those who remained behind were either elderly or financially incapable of leaving. Elements of the Russian media enthusiastically covered the breakdown of law and order in Chechnya, feeding an already strong historical resentment and suspicion of Chechens.

Racial discrimination towards Caucasians was readily apparent on the streets of Moscow where it was a common sight to see uniformed police challenging men of dark complexion (the Russian epithet for Caucasians is *chiorni* or "blacks") for their documents. Caucasian vendors were forcibly evicted from Moscow markets in 1993, a measure that received widespread public support.

Resentment of Chechens, and of Caucasians in general, was inflamed by Caucasian successes in post-Soviet Russian business and the involvement of Caucasians in Russian organized crime. Much of this friction lay in the differing Caucasian and Russian attitudes toward business. There has always been a strong trading tradition in the Caucasus. Whereas in Caucasian societies, the public display of wealth is not out of place, wealth in Russia, especially during the Soviet era, was viewed with hostility.

Chechnya increasingly fell victim to thuggery and organized crime, often with alleged ties to the Kremlin and the Russian "power ministries" of defense and interior. Russian army garrisons were raided for weapons to feed a lucrative trade in arms. In 1992, Dudayev undermined Chechnya's public image by issuing a decree banning the deportation of criminals to any state that did not recognize the republic's independence, a proclamation that gave criminal gangs implicit license to operate in Chechnya.

A Russian-imposed economic blockade on Chechnya's borders served to further entrench lucrative Chechen smuggling operations. Although considerable evidence suggested that Russian and Chechen criminal syndicates worked together to ensure that Chechnya's borders remained permeable, the blockade prevented Dudayev from securing foreign sales of petroleum. As output from Grozny refineries slowed to a trickle, his coffers were deprived of much-needed revenues to sustain what little remained of the legitimate Chechen economy. Dudayev's rule became increasingly erratic and authoritarian as pressures from Moscow increased and clan divisions became more politicized, but his skills as a general rather than as a politician kept him in power.

Up until mid-1994, Dudayev's regime survived. Circumstantial evidence suggests that many in the senior echelons of Russian power profited from it, both politically and economically. Although the full facts have yet to emerge, evidence suggests that all major political groupings in the Russian state had an interest in allowing Dudayev's regime to survive.

Dudayev's balancing act with Russia's power elites was shattered by the attempted coup d'état against President Yeltsin by conservative hard-liners. During fighting on October 3-4 around the Russian parliament building in Moscow, 140 people were killed. The attempted putsch was a turning point. In its aftermath, a shocked Yeltsin jettisoned what remained of his liberal agenda. The fear of civil war and of a Soviet-style collapse pushed the country's constitutional predicament to the forefront.

Two republics within Russia, Tartarstan and Chechnya, had not yet negotiated comprehensive arrangements with the federal authorities. Tartarstan, however, soon signed an

autonomy agreement with Moscow, leaving Chechnya as the sole outsider. As a result, pressure on Dudayev was stepped up. Chechen opposition groups were provided with covert financial and military assistance through faction leader Umar Avturkhanov, a client of Doku Zavgayev in northern Chechnya. Avturkhanov had organized a Provisional Council in 1993 as a potential alternative to the Dudayev regime.¹⁴

Despite pressure from Russia to reach an agreement, by June 1994, negotiations between Moscow and Grozny had broken down. During the late spring and summer, the Russian government continued to bolster the anti-Dudayev faction and set up plans to overthrow the rebel Chechen government by force. Some observers suggest that Moscow actively solicited a green light from Washington to take forceful and decisive measures in Chechnya, seeking reciprocity for an invasion of Chechnya with support of the US-led intervention in Haiti under UN auspices.¹⁵

Fighting broke out between the Russian-backed Avturkhanov camp and Dudayev supporters in the northern Nadterechnaya region on August 6. Four days later, clan chieftains, village elders, and religious leaders voted in Grozny to proclaim a holy war in the event of a Russian intervention. Sporadic fighting continued from September to November, at times reaching Grozny.¹⁶ Two badly organized coup attempts in October and November, backed by covert Russian help, failed to unseat Dudayev. Russian troops captured in the November coup claimed they had been offered money by the FSB to fight. The admission provided Dudayev with excellent propaganda.

By early December, Russia had massed an intervention force in the frontier regions but was publicly discounting the possibility of an invasion, asserting that force would be used to "...eliminate bandit groups" in Chechnya only if all other options were exhausted.¹⁷ In Grozny, Moscow's reassurances were met with skepticism as thousands of Chechens gathered to demonstrate their indignation.

At a CSCE (now OSCE) summit meeting in Budapest on December 6, Russia adopted the organization's Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. Russia made it clear that it regarded the situation in Chechnya strictly as an

internal affair and therefore not open to discussion in the CSCE forum.¹⁸ Back in Chechnya, meanwhile, Dudayev met with Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev. After arranging the release of the Russian prisoners, Grachev asserted that there would be no military solution in Chechnya.

The liberal press in Moscow now warned of an impending crisis, echoing growing concern in Russia's increasingly marginalized reformist circles that Russia's incompetent handling of the demands of its ethnic regions would spell catastrophic violence in Chechnya and upheaval in Moscow. *Sevodnya* reported, "A series of mistakes by our politicians have put us in this stupid position—[we can expect] either bloodshed or the total moral defeat of the authorities." The usually pro-Yeltsin paper *Izvestia* compared the government's policy towards Chechnya as "a bull in the china shop of the Caucasus."¹⁹

The next day, Ingush President and former Soviet army general Ruslen Aushev and Vice President Boris Agapov warned against the use of force in its eastern neighbor and suggested that Ingushetia would resist attempts by Russian forces to transit Ingush territory on their way into Chechnya. Passage of an invasion force through Ingushetia would be regarded by the Ingush as a blatant provocation "...because the Chechen are our brothers."²⁰ Speaking at a gathering of representatives of North Caucasian nationalities, Aushev also condemned Moscow's attempts to remove the provisions on territorial restitution and rights of return contained in the 1992 law on post-deportation rehabilitation.²¹

On December 9, Yeltsin issued a decree "On Measures to End the Activity of Illegal Armed Formations on the Territory of the Chechen Republic and in the Zone of the Ossetian-Ingush Conflict." It authorized "...the use of all available means to ensure the security of the state, the rule of law, civil rights and liberties, the defense of public order, the fight against crime, and the disarming of illegal armed formations."²²

A full-scale intervention began on December 11, with up to 40,000 Russian troops moving into Chechnya from the north, west through Ingushetia, and east through Dagestan.

Foreground

The specific nature of warfare in Chechnya and the baseline conditions that prevailed before the war combined to shape the scale and contours of the humanitarian crisis that followed. Disregard for the welfare of civilians and the unusually antihumanitarian tactics employed by combatants heightened the vulnerability of the civilian population.

Destruction of residential areas and the lack of protection afforded to noncombatants before, during, and after military actions victimized large numbers of Chechen civilians and prompted mass population displacements. Protection and assistance was needed in situ within Chechnya (including relief, human rights protection, and mitigation of the causes of displacement), and in the places of refuge. Most displacement was to other areas within Chechnya. Some Chechen civilians, however, sought shelter in the more secure and hospitable “frontier regions”—that is, in the neighboring republics of Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia. Increasingly inhospitable conditions inside Chechnya, greater access by humanitarian organizations to the nearby republics, and Russian efforts to minimize the visibility of the conflict had the effect of channeling most assistance and protection toward these frontier regions.

The transience of warfare, in which the focus and intensity of military actions changed rapidly and frequently from place to place, meant a considerable back-and-forth movement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) between their home areas and places of refuge. Meanwhile, the diminishing humanitarian presence inside Chechnya and the consequent lack of sound information made it more difficult for humanitarian agencies to predict and track movements of the population, anticipate the needs of the displaced, and respond accordingly.

The effects of war were superimposed on preexisting conditions, many of them unique to the region, which shaped the humanitarian crisis and the responses to it. These included Soviet-era infrastructure, the effects of systemic collapse, instability in Chechnya following unilateral secession, the Russian blockade, and economic collapse before the outbreak

of hostilities in 1994. In addition, cultural variables such as the persistence of Soviet-era attitudes and values and the dynamics of Chechen culture also contributed to shaping the humanitarian landscape.

The war and the local setting combined to present a distinctive arena for humanitarian action. The matrix in Figure 1 applies to the arena the analytical tool of assessing capacities and vulnerabilities. Developed by Mary B. Anderson and Peter J. Woodrow, the matrix identifies ways in which the requisite emergency action may be linked to longer-term development needs by supporting existing local capacities and by discerning the potential development impacts of such interventions.²³

War

The Russian operation in Chechnya was not expected to last long. Neither the protagonists in the conflict nor most humanitarian agencies were prepared for protracted and bruising deployments. A number of trends in the context for humanitarian action emerge from an analysis of five periods during the 21 months between December 1994 and August 1996. These are a tightening of restrictions on humanitarian access and independent humanitarian activity, a worsening of the security situation, and a trend away from meeting humanitarian needs inside Chechnya and toward dealing with the effects of the war on its periphery in the frontier republics.

Phase 1:

Russian Mobilization and Mass Population Displacement (December 1994-July 1995)

Russian forces encountered difficulties even before the invasion began on December 11. There was considerable reluctance at all levels in the Russian military to engage in the operation. The commander of the armored column entering Chechnya from the direction of Mozdok refused to advance after encountering a crowd of Chechen civilian protesters, mostly women.²⁵ In Ingushetia, a Deputy Minister of the Federal Emergency Situations Ministry (EMERCOM) told

Figure 1
Summary of Baseline Conditions in Pre-War Chechnya²⁴

Realm	Capacities	Vulnerabilities
Community Views on Abilities to Create Change	Traditionally adaptive in times of hardship. Accustomed to getting around the system through the informal economy and back channels to officialdom. Distrust and cynicism toward formal authority provides impetus to take action independent of formal structures.	Conservatism and traditionalism. Local communities increasingly at the mercy of armed groups. Lack of confidence in formal structures. Authorities often meet with extreme cynicism and distrust; widespread expectation that solutions will be imposed from above. Accustomed to centrally planned rather than localized solutions to local problems. Heightened vulnerabilities among those displaced from Prigorodnyi Raion in 1992 who took refuge in Chechnya.
Organization and Societal Relations	Strong traditions of hospitality and family honor, especially among males. Very strong ties of kinship, with extended families often reaching into neighboring regions of Dagestan and Ingushetia. Traditionally strong clan organization and enduring respect for village and clan elders. Strong national identity	Increasingly ineffective central authority structures. Strong warrior tradition complements trend toward use of force. Politicization and criminalization of clan organizations; ascendancy of criminal groups and organized crime. Outlaw mentality. Rigidly patriarchal social structure. Tradition of blood feuds and revenge a propagator of violence. Weak clergy and formal religious infrastructure despite growth of Islam. Most formal Soviet era social organizations discredited (e.g. Communist Party, Komsomol, Pioneers), contributing to suspicion of social mobilization, public education, and

Vulnerabilities

propaganda. Suspicion of nongovernmental activity and lack of tradition and awareness of a nongovernmental humanitarian ethos. Interclan hostilities primarily along north-south lines. Interethnic hostilities between Ingush and Ossetians.

Soviet infrastructure highly centralized and generally not conducive to local adaptation. Loss of knowledge of traditional farming methods due to collectivized agriculture. Land tenure confusion and disputes. Social infrastructure (particularly health and education) underdeveloped and severely neglected between 1991-1994. Economic blockade and lack of coherent health system since 1991 interfered with availability of essential drugs. Poor primary health care awareness. Vaccination sporadic. Economic collapse. Ethnic Russians and urbanites generally more vulnerable due to loss of pensions and unpaid salaries. Mass unemployment. Relatively low level of education and high rates of alcoholism among men with ensuing family violence. Collapsed justice system and widespread violent crime. Weapons widely available.

Capacities

subordinated to clan loyalties. Long-lived tradition of self-sufficiency, especially in rural mountain areas in the south. Emerging NGO sector.

Good potential for agricultural self-sufficiency, mostly through subsistence farming and grazing. Good knowledge of food preservation techniques in rural areas. Strong trading tradition. Relatively high level of education among young women.

Realm

Physical/Material Skills, Resources, Hazards

reporters that Russia had no business using the army on its own territory and urged the withdrawal of Russian troops.²⁶

In Moscow, the operation was roundly criticized by ranking members of the political and military establishments. General Alexander Lebed, subsequently Russia's national security advisor, categorically opposed the war.²⁷ Russian Human Rights Commissioner Sergei Kovalyev, a persistent critic of the war since its inception, urged UN and OSCE intervention.²⁸ In the field, press reports from the first days of the invasion depicted an unwilling and demoralized army. Russian conscripts tried to persuade Ingush civilians to disable their armored vehicles and gave them instructions on how to do it.²⁹ The more dangerous side of a demoralized army also emerged. In Ingushetia, clashes between apparently drunk Russian soldiers and local Ingush killed a number of civilians along with the Ingush Minister of Health.³⁰

The Attack on Grozny and Mass Population Displacement

Russian forces met stiff resistance from pro-Dudayev forces on the outskirts of Grozny, and the city was subjected to indiscriminate fire. A full-scale air, artillery, and ground attack commenced on December 31 and continued into March, killing an estimated 15,000 civilians.³¹

"To put the intensity of firing into perspective," wrote Fred Cuny, "the highest level of firing recorded in Sarajevo was 3,500 heavy detonations per day. In Grozny in early February [the rate was] 4,000 detonations per hour."³²

Large areas of the city, primarily residential areas, were leveled. An International Organization for Migration (IOM) housing assessment conducted in July and August 1995 found that 61 percent of Grozny's housing was damaged or destroyed, close to 50 percent beyond repair.³³ The city was left without water, gas, or electricity, and two hospitals were completely destroyed. Moscow installed a sympathetic Territorial Administration in Grozny consisting of Chechens opposed to Dudayev, including Umar Avturkhanov from northern Chechnya.

Despite repeated requests for a humanitarian truce, including a meeting in mid-January 1995 between ICRC President Cornelio Sommaruga and Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, no humanitarian corridors or cease-fires were forthcoming.³⁴ The OSCE Permanent Council issued a chairman's statement calling the humanitarian situation "catastrophic."³⁵ Human Rights Commissioner Kovalyev and a Dudayev envoy lobbied unsuccessfully at the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva for the international community to take action. Meanwhile, the European Union was involved in negotiating the text of a UNHRC chairman's statement on the conflict, a measure one step removed from the more meaningful UNHRC resolution.³⁶

By mid-January, the ICRC estimated that 400,000 civilians had been displaced, comprising nearly one-half of Chechnya's population. Of these IDPs, 260,000 had fled to other areas of Chechnya, 100,000 to Ingushetia, 30,000 to Dagestan, and 5,000 each to North Ossetia and Russia.³⁷ One Russian commentator observed, "Russian forces have chosen the tactic of displacing the population."³⁸ One-quarter of Grozny's pre-war population of 400,000 remained behind as the bombardment continued; ironically many were ethnic Russians who were unable to leave.

Coinciding with President Boris Yeltsin's state of the nation address to the Russian Parliament, the Prime Minister of Ingushetia was able to convene cease-fire talks attended by senior military commanders from both sides. The talks led to a four-day lull in the fighting between February 15-19, during which prisoners were exchanged and bodies collected. Despite initial progress, discussions collapsed for lack of a neutral mediator. As Ingush Prime Minister Agapov observed, "Military officers are holding talks without the politicians. It is very difficult on this basis. Usually politicians create the basis for talks."³⁹ Agapov's words were prophetic. Russia refused to talk directly with Dudayev and had issued a warrant for his arrest. In Moscow, meanwhile, Yeltsin berated the army for its handling of the Chechnya operation and for the human rights violations that had occurred, saying, "The armed forces are not well-prepared for settling conflicts of a local character."⁴⁰

War in the Rural Areas

As fighting continued outside Grozny the targeting of civilian areas and the disproportionate use of force took on a rural variant. Leaving small detachments of fighters in the capital to harass Russian and pro-Moscow Chechen forces, most pro-Dudayev fighters departed for the southern foothills regions where they regrouped and disbursed among towns and villages. Dudayev enjoyed increasing support in many rural areas of Chechnya as the war expanded, but there were well-founded fears among locals that the presence of resistance fighters would bring a devastating Russian response. As a result, local communities often did not embrace pro-Dudayev forces, despite growing resentment toward the Russian military.

Collective punishment emerged as a central feature of the war. A pattern evolved in both Russian and separatist military tactics that was repeated with consistency. Towns and villages suspected of harboring separatist fighters would be encircled by Russian forces who sometimes dropped leaflets that warned the inhabitants not to cooperate with “fighters and other prohibited organizations.” An ultimatum then would be issued demanding the surrender of fighters and weapons and safe passage for MVD troops to come in and “clear” the area. A “peace protocol” often would be signed by local elders and Russian commanders, stipulating local responsibility for maintaining order and nonbelligerency within the Russian cordon. These situations often unraveled very quickly in a climate of lawlessness, hit-and-run attacks by pro-Dudayev fighters, fearful townspeople, and nervous Russian soldiers. After an attack, aid organizations and journalists typically would be barred entry at MVD checkpoints for days or weeks.⁴¹ As one aid agency official noted, “The more you ask permission, the less you get.”⁴²

In rural areas, the formation of small, lightly armed self-defense units in most towns and villages was a legacy of three years of increasing lawlessness under Dudayev. Although not always under the control of local elders, many of these units in the earlier stages of the war had no affiliation with the organized Chechen resistance. In some cases, the self-defense units

exercised restraint to avoid provoking a response from the Russian military. In other cases, the “hotheads” among self-defense units were invited by elders to go to Grozny if they wanted to fight.⁴³ The pro-Dudayev resistance was highly mobile for much of the war although there were bases in the extreme southern regions containing several hundred fighters each.

Among Russian forces, military operations normally engaged a mix of regular army units, whose ranks were filled with young and often poorly-trained conscript soldiers, and Interior Ministry (MVD) and internal security (OMON) units, often containing contract soldiers or policemen specially engaged for duty in Chechnya. Due to the abuses of the local population of western Chechnya by MVD troops in early 1995, regular army conscripts petitioned their commanders to remove the MVD units from the area to help minimize tensions with the local population. In February, the director of Russian border troops conceded the obvious when he stated that residents of villages and towns that had suffered from military activity had developed an acute hostility to any Russian in uniform. Two Russian journalists witnessed an incident where an MVD armored personnel carriers entered the town of Samashki under cover of a white-flagged EMERCOM relief convoy, provoking a battle with the town’s self-defense unit.⁴⁴

Protocols or local understandings were extremely fragile due to the prevailing lawlessness, the proliferation of weapons, the rapid turnover of units and commanders, and parallel but apparently isolated command structures of army, MVD, and OMON units in a single area. Agreements undertaken by one commander would not be honored by another. On one hand, elders who tried to safeguard their towns by talking with the Russian military risked being targeted as traitors by pro-Dudayev fighters. On the other hand, if they allowed fighters to operate in their towns, they risked provoking Russian forces. Where fighters or free agents were present, a minimal provocation was sufficient to elicit an unrestrained response that often included air and artillery bombardments or rocket attacks from helicopter gunships. MVD and OMON troops would then be sent in to “mop up.” A large share of the displacement of the civilian population subsequent to the bombing of Grozny can be attributed to this pattern.

Samashki

The case of Samashki, thoroughly documented by human rights organizations, is instructive, if perhaps somewhat extreme.⁴⁵ It provides a telling and credible illustration of the consequences for an unprotected population caught between a powerful military and the organized Chechen resistance. Among many Chechens, Samashki has become the quintessential symbol of the war.⁴⁶ Our efforts to visit the town in April 1996 were rebuffed at a nearby Russian checkpoint.

Located near Ingushetia on the main highway to Grozny, Samashki quickly became an object of attention by Russian forces after nearby convoys and MVD checkpoints were fired upon. Thirty Russian troops were killed in the Samashki area between December 11, 1994, and the end of March 1995. Samashki's elders were sometimes able to dissuade Russian commanders from taking action, explaining that it was not the residents of Samashki who were acting against them.⁴⁷ Throughout January and February, however, the village came under sporadic air and artillery attack, often prompted by acts of sabotage or sniping by members of a pro-Dudayev unit that was active in the area and had often entered Samashki itself. The town was fired upon by passing Russian convoys a number of times, sometimes provoking an armed response from members of the self-defense unit.

The terms of the initial "peace protocol" presented to the elders of Samashki in February 1995 demanded that all heavy weapons in the village be handed over to Russian forces. In addition, the village was responsible for forming a guard force consisting of 40 to 45 lightly armed local men who would be responsible for the maintenance of order and nonbelligerency within the Russian *cordon sanitaire*. At a public meeting to discuss the agreement, a group of some 200 pro-Dudayev fighters from other areas of Chechnya hotly contested any signing of a protocol. Many townspeople also objected, fearing that the village would be left open to abuses at the hands of the MVD. An agreement was eventually signed by Samashki's mayor and Imam, who were given the responsibility of explaining to the population what was required to avoid an all-out Russian attack.

Amid continuing violence from both Russian and pro-Dudayev forces, a number of villagers who were in favor of the peace agreement became sniper's targets and the council building was blown up shortly after the signing. It was not clear who the perpetrators were. Sporadic violence continued along with further negotiations and ultimatums. In early March, Samashki elders were given three days to turn in weapons and rid the village of fighters. Dudayev's forces left the village at the insistence of religious leaders, elders, and residents on March 3-4. Events continued in this vein until early April when Samashki was heavily shelled, bombed, and strafed over a three-day period.

Although the prior evacuation of civilians had been arranged by agreement between the elders and a Russian commander, the attack began before the time allotted for the evacuation had expired. Those that did evacuate were screened at Russian checkpoints controlling entry to and exit from Samashki. Russian troops fired upon some evacuees. Males of fighting age were arrested and taken to the Mozdok filtration camp where many were subjected to brutal treatment at the hands of their Russian captors.⁴⁸ Several thousand civilians fled to the nearby town of Sernovodsk on the Chechen-Ingush frontier.

Following the bombardment, MVD and OMON troops entered Samashki on April 7-8 to conduct a house-to-house sweep operation. Approximately 120 people were confirmed killed in the operation, of whom 94 were later confirmed to be noncombatants by outside investigators. Numerous atrocities were recorded in subsequent investigations by human rights organizations and members of the Russian Parliament.⁴⁹ The ICRC, which had tried for weeks to get access to Samashki but was blocked several kilometers outside the Russian cordon, was not allowed in to provide relief assistance until May 9.⁵⁰

Other Developments

By late April, the situation in Grozny began to stabilize, and over 100,000 people returned. Aid agencies concentrated on food distributions, assistance to medical facilities, and rehabilitation of essential services such as water and sanitation

systems. Fighting and a prevailing insecurity in rural Chechnya kept most IDPs from returning to other areas, however. In Ingushetia, which had absorbed 100,000 IDPs in addition to those displaced from Prigorodnyi, it was common for Ingush households to give food and shelter to as many as 30 displaced persons from Chechnya.⁵¹ The combined displaced communities nearly doubled the population of Ingushetia. Similarly, Dagestan had absorbed up to 75,000 IDPs. A UNDHA mission in April 1995 to the frontier republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia noted:

The premise on which the emergency programme [of UN agencies for the displaced in areas outside Chechnya] was originally based, i.e., that the majority of IDPs can be supported by so-called host families with modest external assistance had become increasingly tenuous, as a result of the long duration of the stay and the difficult economic situation of the population as a whole.⁵²

DHA also observed that the frontier regions received little assistance from the federal government and that local resources were wearing thin.

Little was known about conditions among the approximately 260,000 IDPs who had fled to southern areas of Chechnya under the control of pro-Dudayev forces. Insecurity and Russian obstruction prevented humanitarian agencies from entering these areas to conduct assessments. The ICRC opened an office in the town of Shali, south of Grozny, in early February, but security problems forced its closure by early April. The first ICRC relief convoy crossed Russian pro-Dudayev "lines" on April 1.⁵³ A surgical team from MSF was deployed to the southern town of Shatoi in March, but was forced to leave in June when Russian forces issued an ultimatum. Another MSF team working in the town of Vedeno decided to hand over its duties to a Chechen medical team when large numbers of pro-Dudayev fighters entered the town.

Under pressure from the West, the Russian Federation approved the deployment of a small group of OSCE observers

to Chechnya on April 26 to operate “in conjunction with the Russian federal and local authorities and in full conformity with the legislation of the Russian Federation.”⁵⁴ The six European and American observers were given diplomatic status to operate the OSCE Assistance Group in Grozny under an ambitious five-point mandate, “[R]especting the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and its Constitution,” they were to:

- promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and establishment of facts concerning their violation; help foster the development of democratic institutions and processes, including the restoration of the local organs of authority; assist in the preparation of possible new constitutional agreements and in the holding and monitoring of elections;
- facilitate the delivery to the region by international and nongovernmental organizations of humanitarian aid for victims of the crisis, wherever they may be located;
- provide assistance to the authorities of the Russian Federation and to international organizations in ensuring the speediest possible return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes in the crisis region;
- promote the peaceful resolution of the crisis and the stabilization of the situation in the Chechen Republic in conformity with the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and in accordance with OSCE principles and pursue dialogue and negotiations, as appropriate, through participation of “round tables,” with a view to establishing a cease-fire and eliminating sources of tension;
- support the creation of mechanisms guaranteeing the rule of law, public safety, and law and order.⁵⁵

Phase 2: Cease-fire (July-October 1995)

As G-7 leaders and Russian President Boris Yeltsin gathered on June 14, 1995, in Canada for a summit meeting pro-Dudayev fighters attacked a police station and seized a hospital in the southern Russian town of Buddenyovsk, taking more than 1,000 civilian hostages. Demands were issued for

the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya, and eight hostages were killed. A widely televised rescue attempt by Russian authorities involving the use of artillery and rocket fire killed approximately 100 hostages. After the intervention of Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, a negotiated end to the crisis allowed Russian parliamentarians and other volunteers to take the place of the captives and accompany the busloads of hostage-takers back to Chechen territory. In the wake of the crisis, ethnic Chechen residents of the Buddeniyovsk area were subjected to harsh reprisals at the hands of local authorities and Cossacks.⁵⁶

The crisis led to talks in Grozny mediated by the OSCE mission. Increased Russian military activity in April and May put pro-Dudayev forces up against the wall, but Dudayev held firm to his insistence on complete sovereignty. Finessing political questions allowed a shaky truce, which held until a military agreement was signed on July 30. The two sides consented to cease military activities and terrorist actions and to exchange prisoners. Russia would withdraw its troops from Chechnya in phases and pro-Dudayev units agreed to phased disarmament. A joint commission was to monitor implementation, but OSCE's role was limited by its grossly understaffed mission of six observers. Discussion on political questions was postponed until after local elections in November, but optimism ran high that the war was over even as hardliners on both sides were advocating its continuation.

The agreement produced a period of relative calm in Chechnya. Sporadic outbursts of violence continued but were localized. IDPs began returning spontaneously to their home areas. As of the end of July, UNDHA estimated that 73,000 of 150,000 officially registered IDPs had returned from Ingushetia, 30,000 of 100,000 registrants from Dagestan, and 2,000 of 7,000 from North Ossetia. The projected "vulnerable" IDP caseload for the end of 1995 was put at 118,000. It was anticipated that UNHCR could begin winding down its operations in the frontier regions.⁵⁷ By mid-September, it was estimated that 120,000 more IDPs had returned to Grozny, bringing its population close to pre-war levels.⁵⁸ An improvement in the security situation allowed freer access by

humanitarian agencies into previously undeserved areas, if only for a brief period.

*Phase 3:
Collapse of Cease-fire, Deterioration of Security Situation
(October-December 1995)*

An opportunity to secure a peace in Chechnya was lost in the summer of 1995. This was due in part to the OSCE's lack of resources in Grozny, itself a consequence of inadequate backing from OSCE member states. Although the mission brokered the cease-fire, it had no tools at its disposal either to consolidate the military agreement or to facilitate a political resolution. The lack of initiative on the political front eventually cost the mission its credibility with separatist Chechen negotiators. At the same time, the OSCE hardly could be forthright in its criticisms of human rights violations for fear of jeopardizing its role as mediator in future peace talks. For the latter part of 1995, the Assistance Group was increasingly preoccupied with keeping in contact with the various interlocutors and, under pressure from Washington, trying to determine the whereabouts of missing aid worker Cuny. Serious security problems and freedom-of-movement difficulties compromised the mission's effectiveness and led to the incongruous scenario of trying to serve as honest broker while relying for protection on the presence of Russian tanks outside the office door.

Due to circumstances not wholly attributable to the OSCE's lackluster performance, the momentum toward a sustainable peace was short-lived. The agreement left hardliners on both sides feeling that negotiators had done too well and conceded too much. Continued localized violence seemed to justify this view as serious efforts to proceed with troop withdrawal and disarmament were undermined. Pro-Dudayev forces turned in less than 1,000 weapons by the end of August. Most were redistributed to self-defense units, partly formed from recently demobilized Chechen fighters.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, titular political authority in Chechnya was turned over to Doku Zavgayev, the leader ousted by Dudayev in 1991, and a pro-Moscow government of the Chechen Republic whose police and interior troops fought alongside or in place of Russian

units. The measure drew a further division between Chechens and complicated subsequent negotiations. The Zavgayev administration now insisted on being an equal partner in any negotiations. The OSCE mission quickly became a focal point for frustrations in the Zavgayev camp over their exclusion from the talks. Humanitarian organizations for their part would need to take all three sets of political authorities into account.

A series of assassination attempts targeted some of the more conciliatory Russian officials and commanders. A bomb blast on October 6, condemned by representatives of Dudayev, severely wounded Lt. Gen. Romanov, the commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, who was widely believed to favor a peaceful settlement. A rocket was fired through the roof of the building housing the OSCE Assistance Group, and soon afterwards, Russian troops disbursed an armed demonstration at the OSCE compound staged by an armed militia loyal to Grozny's pro-Moscow mayor. The demonstrators accused the OSCE of being pro-Dudayev and demanded that the mission leave. OSCE reduced its staff in Grozny for security reasons.⁶⁰ Amid increasing acrimony and threats from both sides, negotiations were suspended on October 10, following Russian air and artillery strikes on southern villages in which 40 civilians were killed and many homes destroyed. An ambush on October 25 killed 18 Russian soldiers.

Many IDPs who had fled earlier fighting had returned to their home areas, leaving an estimated 45,000 displaced in Ingushetia and 10,000 in Dagestan. The ICRC anticipated that these numbers would increase again with the onset of winter and deteriorating security conditions.⁶¹ In Sernovodsk, a predominantly Chechen town then considered part of Ingushetia, a sanatorium housing several thousand IDPs from neighboring Samashki was cordoned off by Russian troops who suspected that pro-Dudayev fighters were sheltering among civilians. UNHCR, the ICRC, and other humanitarian agencies were later barred access. Female IDPs and outside supporters established peace camps at the Russian checkpoints surrounding the sanatorium, hoping by their presence to dissuade Russian forces from entering. The camps were the object of violence on a number of occasions.⁶²

Nightly shootings in Grozny and increased crime and banditry in rural areas signaled a severe deterioration in security. The initial lull in fighting had allowed aid organizations to begin working in the south. This now led to suspicions among Russian and pro-Moscow territorial authorities that pro-Dudayev groups were being provisioned by humanitarian agencies. Security problems, some of which appeared to be targeted, began to plague especially those agencies that were active in the South.⁶³ Suspicion of humanitarian agencies was also dangerously high among Chechen beneficiaries of assistance. One agency received a warning not to return to a village that Russian aircraft had bombed some 15 minutes after its departure. The agency had been conducting an assessment visit for rehabilitation of a hospital.⁶⁴ Fighting, the presence of land mines, and displacement of the population in this area prevented the harvest of crops, and food stocks were virtually exhausted.⁶⁵

*Phase 4:
Resumption of Unrestrained Warfare
(December 1995-January 1996)*

Conditions deteriorated as Moscow pressed ahead with plans to hold legislative and presidential elections in Chechnya December 14-17. The Dudayev camp refused to recognize or participate in the elections, and Dudayev himself promised, "The war is just beginning." He also ruled out terrorist attacks, saying, "The secret of war is not putting a bomb in a metro station. Those who violate the rules of war have already lost."⁶⁶

Gudermes and Pervomaiskoye

In anticipation of election-related violence, most humanitarian agencies temporarily withdrew from Grozny while those that remained scaled back their staff and programs.⁶⁷ As predicted, the heaviest fighting since the July 30 cease-fire broke out on the first day of balloting when pro-Dudayev fighters attacked Gudermes, Chechnya's second largest city, which had come under control of Russian forces in March without a battle.⁶⁸ Gudermes was swelled with voters and

IDPs when the attack began. Russian troops had surrounded the city some days before and reportedly would not allow an evacuation. Just after the fighting started, the city government broadcast announcements over the local radio station instructing people not to leave the city.

Extensive damage was inflicted in the Russian counter-attack that lasted until December 24. Civilians attempting to flee the city were fired upon on numerous occasions by Russian forces, and on other occasions were used as human shields by pro-Dudayev fighters also attempting to escape.⁶⁹ Extensive looting by Russian troops affected both Chechen and Russian residents.⁷⁰ The ICRC and other agencies were denied access to Gudermes until December 26 and were routinely blocked thereafter.⁷¹ Local villages and the town of Khasavyurt, Dagestan, absorbed between 20,000 and 25,000 new IDPs while approximately 35,000 residents remained.⁷²

Tensions in Dagestan

On January 9, 1996, pro-Dudayev fighters crossed the Dagestani frontier and seized 2,000 hostages, mostly civilians, in the town of Kizlyar. After herding the hostages into a hospital and executing several of them, the fighters struck a deal with Dagestani officials allowing them to proceed with 160 hostages to the village of Pervomaiskoye, also in Dagestan.⁷³ By January 15, the village was encircled by Russian troops and armor then entirely destroyed by a three-day artillery and aerial bombardment. Sixteen hostages were killed, while most fighters were able to escape through the Russian cordon.

Ethnic Chechen residents of Dagestan and Chechen IDPs taking refuge there were fearful of Dagestani reprisals for the actions of the fighters. "In less than a week," wrote one journalist at the scene, "Dagestanis and Chechens who have lived together or in neighboring villages for years have stopped trusting each other, and are planning for the worst. Chechen villagers living in Dagestan are bolting their doors and arming themselves."⁷⁴ Their fears were not unfounded. Magomed Gusayev, the Dagestani minister of nationalities, was blunt: "If they [Chechens] want blood to spill here, it will spill forever. They have lived here as refugees in our land and all we

have asked is peace. Now what we have is war. The Chechens should go home."⁷⁵

In a move reminiscent of Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic, Yeltsin poured fuel on the fire at the height of tensions when, during a televised interview, he stated, "Rebels have intruded into Dagestani territory, and Avars [a Dagestani ethnic group] are ready to cut the throats of Chechens."⁷⁶

Human Rights Watch credits Dagestani authorities and community leaders for defusing the potentially explosive situation.⁷⁷ Dagestani clerics offered to form a corridor for the evacuation of Chechen fighters back to Chechen territory. Groups of local Dagestanis appealed to Russian commanders not to escalate the situation. Although there were reports of isolated incidents, UNHCR was aware of no confirmed cases of intercommunal violence.⁷⁸

During the Gudermes and Pervomaiskoye actions, humanitarian and journalistic access was barred to Grozny and eastern Chechnya by the Russian authorities. According to Human Rights Watch:

The Russian command in Grozny and Moscow refused to give ICRC officials an explanation for these restrictions and indeed failed to respond to their requests for an interlocutor until late January. [MSF-Belgium] was unable to distribute relief and medical supplies to Gudermes, since a near-total ban on their travel was in effect at checkpoints throughout December and January. The Russian military refused at any level to engage in talks with either relief organization, and thus brought to a halt most of their work.⁷⁹

*Phase 5:
Ongoing Hostilities throughout Chechnya
(February-August 1996)*

A Russian offensive from February to April targeted towns and villages that previously had escaped the fighting

but were swelled with IDPs, and others that had been attacked before and reentered by pro-Dudayev fighters.

Five towns in Ingushetia near the Chechen frontier were encircled by Russian troops. The Ingush village of Arshty was bombed and shelled in late February, resulting in a tense confrontation. Russian forces were ostensibly in pursuit of pro-Dudayev forces who had fled from their base in Bamut, a few miles from the Ingush frontier. A car carrying the Ingush premier and other officials to the area was shot at by Russian helicopters.⁸⁰ Russian forces were pulled back only after strongly-worded exchanges between the Ingush capital and Moscow.

Events in western Chechnya followed the pattern established in early 1995, causing widespread destruction of civilian areas and the displacement of countless civilians, many for the second or third time. On March 3, Federal troops in Sernovodsk broke an agreement reached the day before by commencing a sweep operation in the town and prompting clashes with a small self-defense militia. Following the Russian withdrawal, the town was heavily bombed and shelled for three days. A local commander who opened an evacuation corridor for civilians during the attack was reportedly relieved of his command and possibly executed for dereliction of duty.⁸¹ Sernovodsk was swelled with IDPs from Samashki and had been cordoned off by Russian forces since October.

Soon after, nearby Samashki also came under attack again. As in the previous year, a large group of pro-Dudayev fighters were using the town as a base of operations and had constructed fortifications in residential areas in anticipation of a Russian attack. Russian troops were funneled into an ambush and attacked, causing many casualties and resulting in a full-scale air and artillery barrage on the town. Most of the organized resistance escaped Samashki through Russian lines, leaving the civilian population that remained to bear the brunt of the attack and sweep operation that followed. As in the previous attack on Samashki in 1995, many atrocities were documented, and 174 people, mostly noncombatants, were confirmed killed.⁸² The combined attacks on Sernovodsk, Samashki, and other towns in western Chechnya caused the displacement of approximately 16,000 persons to Ingushetia,

with many times that figure fleeing to other locations inside Chechnya.

Several hundred pro-Dudayev fighters launched an attack on Grozny on March 6, taking almost 100 Russian construction workers hostage. The deterioration of the military and political situation throughout Chechnya increased the space for criminal activity and blurred the distinctions between political or military violence and banditry. An OSCE report on human rights in Chechnya issued a sharp rebuke to both forces, qualifying recent Russian attacks on populated areas as "warfare against the civilian population." Dudayevist forces were condemned for taking civilian hostages, which had become "a consistent pattern in their warfare," and for "launching attacks against Federal military positions from within populated areas and, by doing so, exposing civilians to Federal reaction."⁸³ Russian forces were cited for a lack of military discipline and criminal acts including robbery, looting, wanton destruction, extortion, arson, and drunkenness on duty. The pro-Moscow Zavgayev administration was prompted to condemn the excesses of Russian forces on a number of occasions.

Deteriorating security and increased obstruction by Russian and territorial authorities forced many agencies to withdraw from Chechnya by early spring. Many agencies regrouped in the frontier regions, gearing some of their programs to assistance to IDPs outside of Chechnya. Others made day trips to Chechnya when security conditions permitted or maintained scaled-back operations in Grozny by working through local staff. Those that opted to maintain a presence in Grozny operated with a reduced logistics capacity through local staff and skeleton or transient expatriate personnel while drastically curtailing their movements.

Two expatriate aid workers had been killed in Chechnya since the beginning of the war in what appeared to be targeted incidents. One agency active in Nazran and Grozny tabulated 38 serious security incidents involving humanitarian agencies during the eight-month period ending in March 1996. The list excluded relatively routine experiences of harassment at checkpoints, "collateral damage," and minor thefts. It also excluded several armed abductions and attempted ransoming

of humanitarian personnel, which aid agencies chose to keep quiet.

Many of the incidents were attributable to the lawlessness that prevailed in most areas; others had political overtones. In a televised broadcast in the spring, Dudayev made an explicit threat to humanitarian agencies, warning that they would risk consequences in the future if they could not produce identification issued by his authorities when it was demanded of them. Where or how this identification would be issued was not specified.⁸⁴ Later in mid-April, the Russian Foreign Ministry made the following statement:

[T]he situation in the North Caucasian region has recently become more complicated because of the developments in the Chechen Republic and in neighboring administrative regions....[W]e urgently recommend to temporarily limit the visits to that region of the Russian Federation by representatives of diplomatic missions and international organizations. In case of dire need to visit the trouble spots, it is suggested to maintain contacts with the federal authorities to ensure safety.⁸⁵

Many humanitarian organizations regarded the statement as a veiled threat, considering that aid agency vehicles had been fired upon at Russian checkpoints.

Potemkin Peace

As presidential elections approached in Russia Yeltsin announced a unilateral cessation of hostilities in Chechnya to commence on April 1. Although "special operations" would be allowed to continue against separatist forces, Yeltsin promised a phased withdrawal of Russian troops. Despite Yeltsin's claims that "not one single shot" was being fired in Chechnya, April 1 came and went with no noticeable change. During the visit of the research team to Chechnya during this period, air and artillery attacks continued unabated throughout much of Chechnya. Dudayev protested in an interview on April 7 that

neither he nor Russian forces had been officially informed of the cease-fire.⁸⁶

Dudayev was reported killed by a Russian air strike on April 21 near the southern village of Gehki Chu, about 18 miles southwest of Grozny. Poet Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev was chosen as Dudayev's successor, apparently after considerable infighting among separatist power brokers. Yandarbayev, who had recruited Dudayev into the separatist movement and served as his chief ideologist, vowed to revenge his death.

On May 27, however, Yandarbayev flew to Moscow under tight security to sign a cease-fire with Yeltsin. On June 10, the presidential election just weeks away, the OSCE convened another round of talks in the Ingush capital Nazran. Several days of discussions led to the signing of two protocols to the Moscow agreement stipulating an exchange of detainees, the dismantling of Russian checkpoints, a cessation of hostilities, and a timetable for the withdrawal of Russian units. The Russian filtration camps were to be closed. Russian negotiators agreed to postpone Chechnya's participation in the upcoming election, while separatist representatives pledged that their forces would not disrupt elections in Russia. Although he had a representative in attendance acting as a signatory along with Russian and separatist authorities, the agreement drew the ire of Doku Zavgayev, who complained that the OSCE had exceeded its authority by circumventing the Grozny authorities.⁸⁷ The convoy carrying separatist negotiators and OSCE representatives was attacked twice with command-detonated mines near Russian checkpoints on its way back to Grozny. Six persons were injured.

Two days later, Russian authorities reneged on their commitment to cancel elections in Chechnya under pressure from the Zavgayev administration. Separatist forces exercised restraint, however, and token balloting proceeded with few incidents. Yeltsin was reelected to the Russian presidency on July 3, after appointing retired general Alexander Lebed as national security advisor. Lebed's appointment was viewed with optimism. A purge of Kremlin hardliners included Defense Minister Grachev, whose fatal miscalculation in 1994 had led to a protracted and bloody war. Lebed had gone on

record before the election as favoring a peaceful settlement to the crisis, and did not rule out a referendum in Chechnya on the sovereignty issue. His position on Chechnya was more pragmatic than humanitarian: "It's crazy to let an enclave exist in your own land whose population hates its so-called country from the bottom of its heart, despises its laws and pays no taxes."⁸⁸ In light of subsequent events, it is likely that the peace talks before Yeltsin's reelection were primarily an election maneuver, not a serious attempt at a long-term solution to the conflict.

On July 8, heavy fighting resumed with renewed Russian attacks on Chechen towns and villages south of Grozny. The ICRC estimated that in mid-July there were 50,000 IDPs in Ingushetia, and 45,000 still in Dagestan. On August 3, several hundred separatist fighters moved into Grozny and a pitched battle raged throughout the city, forcing Russian forces to withdraw from the city center. Russian installations and buildings housing the Chechen Territorial Administration in Grozny were targeted for destruction. The Zavgayev administration, blaming the OSCE for the situation and calling on Russian forces to be mindful of the civilian population, was evacuated by helicopter to the Russian air base at Khankala north of Grozny. The OSCE mission left Chechnya due to deteriorating security conditions.

The ICRC, which maintained 10 expatriate aid workers in Grozny, pleaded for a humanitarian cease-fire, but was unable to leave its own compound during the fighting to collect the wounded. Approximately 60,000 people fled the city. Numerous news accounts reported that civilians had been fired upon by Russian aircraft. In addition, corridors ostensibly set up to aid in the evacuation of civilians were closed for all practical purposes by stepped-up military activity.

An interim commander of Russian forces in Chechnya announced, apparently without the approval of Moscow, that a full-scale attack on Grozny would commence on August 22, prompting an additional 70,000 residents to flee.⁸⁹ Following bombardment of the city on August 21, efforts by Russian National Security Chief Lebed, who had received new powers in the wake of President Yeltsin's reelection, appeared to have secured a cease-fire agreement, stipulating a separation of

forces and joint patrolling by Russian and separatist forces to control outbreaks of violence.

Summary

This retrospective view of the war has suggested several discernible patterns in the evolving context for humanitarian action. First, restrictions on humanitarian access at many levels and other threats to the independence of humanitarian action were a problem from the beginning of the war and have generally worsened since. As a result, disproportionate humanitarian resources were channeled into areas on the periphery of the conflict where security conditions and political interference were much less problematic. Second, the security environment generally worsened over time. Third, as the needs of the civilian population inside Chechnya increased, the ability of the aid community to mount effective responses decreased. The focus of the humanitarian action was diverted increasingly away from meeting needs in situ and toward dealing with the effects of the war on its periphery.

CHAPTER 2
THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Effective humanitarian action in war relieves life-threatening suffering by providing material assistance and protecting fundamental human rights. Protection entails safeguarding the well-being of war-affected people by ensuring that they have access to sufficient humanitarian assistance when and where they need it. It prevents or minimizes the damaging effects of warfare on life and property and advocates adherence to international norms of conduct by combatants and authorities. At an operational level, the mere presence of humanitarian agencies and other entities such as observer missions can deter abuse through insertion between combatants.

There are limits to the talents and resources of humanitarian agencies for providing protection when their efforts are unsupported by meaningful measures to address the emergency on a political level. Where operational capacities for providing protection are depleted, political measures need to begin. In this way, the actions of national governments and international organizations are integral parts of the humanitarian system.

In the first 21 months of war in Chechnya, the political modalities of protection were conspicuous by their absence. Despite the best efforts of operational agencies, the humanitarian response was, with few exceptions, nearly completely bereft of protection functions. Among key international players, the humanitarian crisis was subordinated to a range of other concerns relating to Russia as a whole, effectively precluding a symbiotic relationship between operational humanitarian agencies and political actors. Specifically, the requisite political-security framework for an adequate humanitarian response inside Chechnya did not materialize. Humanitarian actors were left to their own devices to deal with access limitations, serious security problems, and political interference. Many found continued activity in Chechnya untenable and departed for neighboring republics where the environment was more conducive to humanitarian activity. The few aid agencies that stayed in Chechnya found their

work increasingly difficult and, by their own admission, inadequate. The response to those most in need of assistance was severely compromised.

Humanitarian action in the Chechnya conflict requires appraisal from three different vantage points. First, external constraints are examined, with specific reference to the political-security dimension and the deployment of UN agencies. Second, locally imposed constraints on humanitarian activity are reviewed. Third, the comparative advantages of the major actors are assessed. It is useful throughout to keep in mind the phases of the war described in the previous chapter.

The Humanitarian Landscape

The bombing of Grozny and the sudden displacement of 400,000 people in the early stages of the war elicited a relatively quick and effective response from operational agencies. Initial efforts focused on alleviating the direct effects of the war and the ensuing flight of the population. Even before the eruption of hostilities and in anticipation of their outbreak, ICRC and MSF began distributions of emergency medical supplies to Chechen hospitals in September 1994. Soon after the scale of the humanitarian emergency became clear, the ICRC launched an appeal for \$42.8 million by mid-January 1995. Specialized agencies of the United Nations responded to a Russian request for assistance to the displaced persons who had taken refuge in Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and Dagestan. UN activities are described in more detail below.

The ICRC was active in providing emergency relief in Chechnya and among the displaced in the frontier regions—that is, outside of Chechnya but in neighboring Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia. The ICRC also pursued its traditional visits to detainees and, later, established a program to disseminate international humanitarian law. A family tracing and message service was set up shortly after the scope of displacement became apparent, attracting a huge response from among the IDP population. The ICRC coordinated water distribution in Grozny with MSF and continued medical assistance and rehabilitation of hospitals throughout the North Caucasus.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-France and MSF-Belgium worked to provide direct medical and surgical assistance throughout Chechnya and the frontier regions. Beginning in March 1995, MSF initiated an effort to rebuild a minimal medical service in Grozny and established medical missions in southern Chechnya where the bulk of Russian military activity was then directed.

Also involved from the outset of the emergency was IOM, which remained a prominent actor until May 1996. The severity of the population displacement from the Chechnya conflict prompted IOM to issue an emergency appeal for \$9 million in addition to funds sought through the UN Consolidated Appeal for work in the frontier regions. By the end of 1995, over \$5 million had been pledged, much of it in the early stages of the emergency. IOM's activities in Chechnya included the evacuation of vulnerable groups from war-affected areas to safe areas within Chechnya and to the frontier regions, shelter assistance and reconstruction, and basic infrastructure repair. IOM also provided assistance to the Russian FMS in upgrading its capacity to register and monitor IDP needs.

In the early months following the outbreak of hostilities, a number of international NGOs with medical or relief orientations also arrived on the scene, including Medical Emergency Relief International (MERLIN), MEDAIR, Action Internationale Contre la Faim (AICF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Equilibre, and Médecins du Monde (MDM). NGO activities concentrated on direct medical assistance and rehabilitation of medical facilities, food distributions to vulnerable groups in Grozny, and winterization of communal shelters and residential housing. Apart from MSF, most NGOs that responded to the war in Chechnya were generally small operations with about six expatriate personnel or less.

Although the continued bombing of Grozny throughout the first 10 weeks of 1995 prevented full-scale activity in the city by humanitarian organizations, they responded quickly when conditions permitted. They were more able to make a contribution in the frontier regions, where their early response helped avert large-scale loss of life among the displaced persons who had fled their homes in Chechnya in winter conditions. Short-term needs for food and nonfood items

were largely met. Strong ties of clan and kinship served to reduce the longer-term assistance needs of Chechen IDPs who often found refuge with host families or friends in other areas of Chechnya or the frontier regions.

Ingushetia and Dagestan were generous places of refuge. Against the backdrop of swelling IDP populations, however, clashes between locals and Russian troops threatened to drag Chechnya's neighbors into the war. The influx of aid to the frontier regions to help cope with the needs of IDPs contributed to relieving some of the pressure on local authorities and within host families. To avert tensions between the displaced persons of Prigorodnyi, and the newer arrivals from Chechnya, agencies in Ingushetia attended to the needs of both populations, who often lived in close quarters. UNHCR received a formal request from Ingush authorities for assistance with the Prigorodnyi displaced persons in July 1995 and responded promptly.

A minority of displaced Chechens sought accommodation in communal shelters, where living conditions, particularly with respect to sanitation and the availability of clean water, tended to be poor. Reliance on outside shelter assistance suggested a lack of family ties, a mark of shame in Chechen culture.¹ The most vulnerable among the displaced persons tended to be those who had been displaced before from the fighting in Prigorodnyi, the elderly, and families with many children. The ethnic-Slav minority also was considered to be especially at risk, lacking the support systems offered by extended family ties.

A UNICEF report on the situation of IDP children in Dagestan noted several concerns at the end of 1995, including food insecurity, lack of adequate resources for child care and development, an absence of organization among IDPs, various degrees and types of war trauma, and poor conditions in collective centers. High rates of alcohol abuse and family violence among the IDP population also were cited. Similar problems existed among IDPs in Ingushetia and North Ossetia.

The IDP population was extremely mobile. Expatriates nicknamed IDPs "aid tourists" for their habit of registering for assistance in the frontier regions, attending distributions there, and then returning to Chechnya. Rather than being motivated

by a desire for “double dipping,” however, their mobility had more to do with the transience of warfare in Chechnya. Agencies working among the displaced were in a constant struggle with numbers, perhaps more so than in other complex emergencies.² “Caution is of the essence,” observed the ICRC, “when trying to estimate numbers of displaced persons, since people flee Chechnya for the neighboring republics when security is hazardous, and then return once conditions have improved.”³ UNHCR’s Ingushetia operation introduced a “spot-check” system in an effort to stay current on IDP numbers and needs.

In sum, humanitarian action was more effective where the need was less urgent. Compared to conditions in the frontier regions, protection and assistance needs were much greater inside Chechnya where the population faced a life-threatening emergency and where the events causing mass displacement were ongoing. Proportionate international presence inside Chechnya also would have increased the exposure of the war abroad, a demonstrably undesirable side-effect from the point of view of Russian authorities. Since there were fewer beneficiaries of adequate protection and assistance in situ, the humanitarian extremity of civilians and the extent of population displacement were much worse than would have been the case had independent and proportionate action been allowed to proceed.

The Political/Security Dimension

As late as August 1996, the lack of an effective political-security framework for expanding the space for humanitarian action inside Chechnya and for addressing the causes of the humanitarian emergency continued to be the major obstacle to an effective humanitarian response. Such a framework was provided by neither the OSCE nor the United Nations, in each instance reflecting the unwillingness of governments to apply concerted and sustained diplomatic and political pressure.

Despite its ambitious mandate and the dedication of some of its observers, the OSCE Assistance Group remained largely a token international presence throughout the conflict. In fact, when a new head of mission arrived in Grozny early in 1996,

OSCE observers suggested that the best course of action for the Assistance Group was to pack up and go home, protesting loudly about the behavior of combatants and the insincerity of Russian efforts to seek a peaceful settlement to the crisis.⁴ The mission's limited complement of six observers and diplomats was unequal to its mandated tasks in the complex environment of ongoing war. Its potential was further undermined by insufficient political support from member states, which at times undercut the maintenance of even the minimal staffing levels permitted in the OSCE's agreement with Russia.

Also a limiting factor, the mission's mandated roles of mediation and human rights monitoring and reporting proved to be mutually exclusive. OSCE officials were reluctant to talk about human rights for fear of jeopardizing sensitive political negotiations. They tended to do so only when there were no cease-fire negotiations in progress. The OSCE mission prepared a damning report on the human rights situation in Chechnya in March 1996, during a period when negotiations were not being pursued. However, the report was subsequently watered down sentence-by-sentence at the OSCE's Vienna headquarters, then leaked to the media.⁵

Similarly, the presence of the OSCE had few benefits for humanitarian organizations. Although charged with facilitating their work, the Assistance Group grappled with its own difficulties with freedom-of-movement and security. In some cases, it informed the agencies that it had negotiated humanitarian corridors to ensure access to civilian populations at specific times and places. When agencies showed up prepared to offer assistance, local people and combatants seemed unaware of the OSCE's arrangements.

There are recent indications that the Assistance Group may have found useful, if limited, roles for itself more in line with its capacities than with its mandate. In March 1996, the OSCE head of mission convened a meeting of aid representatives and officials in the Zavgayev administration to voice the concerns of the dwindling humanitarian community in Grozny. In addition, the shelling of the town of Shali was averted in the summer of 1996 after the OSCE mission brokered local negotiations between town elders, Russian commanders, separatist forces, and ICRC delegates. Whether

future roles in this vein will be possible with involvement of the OSCE in formal negotiations at a higher level remains to be seen.

The Political Role of the UN and Other International Actors

Even more conspicuous was the absence of the United Nations. In fact, a widespread view among aid workers in the region was that a weakened OSCE was allowed into Chechnya only after the UN itself had been effectively barred. Member states were nearly unanimous in viewing the unfolding crisis in Chechnya as an internal affair of Russia. Even if governments had felt otherwise, Russia's seat on the Security Council and the specter of a Cold War-style confrontation there worked to render a UN role less likely. As a result, the provisions of the UN Charter's chapters 6 and 7 were not invoked, as in other recent conflicts, as a launching pad for a political-security framework or humanitarian activity.

The absence of UN involvement did not go unchallenged. In December 1995, amid deepening civilian distress, Human Rights Watch challenged the UN secretary-general for a perceived abrogation of responsibility on humanitarian and human rights issues. The United Nations' chief executive officer was criticized for having failed to "uphold the human rights principles set out in the UN Charter. His refrain that he is merely a humble servant of 185 masters cannot mask his abdication of leadership in this area... [A]t the height of the butchery in Chechnya, the Secretary General told journalists that he had 'no comment' on the brutal war."⁶

A spokesman of Boutros-Ghali responded angrily, calling the criticism "demeaning" to the United Nations: "[F]ar from withholding comment, the Secretary-General expressed his great personal anguish over the fighting. He did, correctly, explain that the United Nations had no mandate to intervene."⁷

Nevertheless, such criticism raised compelling questions. The secretary-general has the authority to use his office to call attention to humanitarian crises and gross violations of human rights and to advocate adherence to international humanitarian law, even in the absence of expressed concerns to that effect

by member states.⁸ The involvement of regional security organizations in a given conflict does not relieve the world body of its own responsibilities.

The war in Chechnya, it is clear, was nested within a vast array of international political, economic, and security concerns related to Russia as a whole. The desire of Western governments to ensure that Yeltsin's opponents were kept out of office effectively squelched much of the criticism and pressure from abroad, especially in the early stages of the war and during the unrestrained renewal of hostilities in early 1996. A full slate of foreign policy issues on which Russia held trump cards also contributed to an unwillingness among governments to upset the status quo in defense of humanitarian principles. They feared that Russian perspectives on Bosnia, NATO enlargement, arms control, and other issues might have taken an unwelcome turn had the subject of Chechnya been pressed with any vigor. The role of Caspian Sea oil and the proposed Russian pipeline through Chechnya has been the favored geopolitical conspiracy theory among critics who take a more cynical view of Western acquiescence.

International reticence concerning Chechnya reflected other more subtle but still important influences. The level of protest and resistance to the war was initially high in Russia itself. To the outside observer, the high-level condemnations and street-level protests that emerged in Moscow suggested that Russian democracy was expressing itself in dissenting to the Chechnya operation. In this context, some argued that criticism from abroad on Russian policy toward Chechnya might have provoked a backlash in Moscow, particularly given the fragility of post-Soviet political culture. The ascendancy of hardliners (the so-called "war-party") in the Kremlin as a result of the war was unforeseen. As Russian conservatives became more entrenched and their liberal counterparts more marginalized with the war's continuation, it became increasingly difficult for foreign governments to be openly critical of Yeltsin's policies in Chechnya for fear of strengthening the relative position of hardliners who were apt to strike an even more uncompromising tone than Yeltsin.

The prevailing reticence limited attempts among international actors to exercise leverage with Russia. In the early

stages of the war, the Council of Europe (COE) delayed consideration of Russia's application for admission, primarily due to objections over the violation of human rights by Russian forces in Chechnya. Russia's membership was eventually granted in February 1996, but a COE Ad-Hoc Committee on Chechnya was established to monitor and report on the situation and to put resources at the disposal of the parties to the conflict. Similar concerns early in the war prompted the European Union to defer a trade accord with Russia. Following a favorable report on the human rights situation by the OSCE Assistance Group in June 1995, the accord was ratified in November.

In the Republican-controlled U.S. Congress, the war in Chechnya often was cited as an argument for cutting back on financial aid to Russia, although this approach was consistent with the direction of Republican policy prescriptions quite apart from the conflict. Clinton administration officials, meanwhile, worried that cutbacks in Washington's assistance for whatever reason could contribute to further sociopolitical disintegration in Russia. A frequent objection to Western policies toward Russia was that while these policies were pro-market and pro-Yeltsin, they were seldom pro-democracy.⁹

As the war continued, IMF assistance to Russia attracted particular criticism. The advocacy director of Human Rights Watch in Washington, Holly Burkhalter, noted that the IMF approved a \$6.8 billion loan to Russia just as Russian forces were completing their April 1995 sweep operation in the Chechen town of Samashki. Quoting figures provided by the Russian authorities themselves, she concluded that the monthly costs of the war exceeded the monthly IMF payments. "Nothing is left over for currency stabilization, income generation, and the IMF's other lofty goals."¹⁰ Further IMF credits totaling over \$10 billion were extended in 1996.¹¹

Questioned about the propriety of IMF loans in light of the situation in Chechnya, IMF head Michael Camdessus acknowledged that he preferred "to see the government spending money in reconstructing Chechnya [rather] than in developing other operations there." However, the question of whether the IMF might be subsidizing the war was basically irrelevant. "[T]he tragic developments in Chechnya are not

sufficient reason not to help Russia in its courageous effort to rebuild its economy."¹²

At various times throughout the war, the Russian government committed multimillion dollar funding packages to Chechnya's reconstruction. The Russian prosecutor general reported in January 1996, however, that much of this money had been stolen. Particularly hard-hit were rehabilitation projects in agriculture, health, and community services. Less affected were railroad and refinery reconstruction.¹³

In response to foreign protest over Chechnya, Russia played on international sensitivity to terrorism, issued extensive disinformation, and decreed cease-fires that were then not implemented. Such steps, however transparent, provided foreign governments with rationalizations for inaction at critical junctures. Three weeks before a 1996 G-7 summit meeting in Moscow, for example, Yeltsin decreed a unilateral cease-fire in Chechnya. Yeltsin's claims in the days preceding the summit that hostilities had indeed ceased appeared to have been accepted at face value by G-7 leaders. In any event, Chechnya was not placed on the summit agenda, despite media reports and a direct appeal by MSF to the G-7 attesting to continued bombing and shelling and serious human rights abuses. Governments collectively did little to provide the necessary political-security framework for humanitarian action.

The Humanitarian Role of the UN

In December 1994, Russia requested UN assistance for dealing with persons displaced to neighboring republics. The request excluded UN assistance inside Chechnya, where needs were greatest. Specialized agencies of the UN reacted quickly to the opening provided in Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia.

UNHCR's involvement on behalf of displaced persons was conditional on the consent of the host country and a special request from the UN secretary-general. Accordingly, the invitation was forwarded to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the office of the secretary-general. An immediate response of 28 planeloads of airlifted emergency aid

from UNHCR, World Food Programme (WFP), and UNICEF was organized in January and February 1995. Following an ad-hoc appeal, the United Nations issued a consolidated appeal for displaced persons in the three republics for the period between January and June 1995, including funds for IOM. Of a target figure of over \$25 million, pledges by July 1995 amounted to \$17.4 million. Requested funds were divided among UNHCR (\$10.4 million), WFP (\$6.8), UNICEF (\$5), WHO (\$.7), DHA (\$.25), and IOM (\$2).¹⁴ The appeal was based on an assessment of the needs in the three outlying republics; no needs assessment was conducted inside Chechnya nor were funds requested for activities there.

UN activity in the frontier regions focused on providing emergency relief, including large quantities of emergency rations distributed by WFP through UNHCR and of medical supplies provided by WHO through UNICEF. In addition, UNICEF embarked on an immunization and cholera-prevention program in Dagestan. A specialist in trauma relief was deployed and established a network of trauma counselors among the IDP populations in Ingushetia, North Ossetia, and Dagestan.

UNHCR provided technical, material, and capacity-building assistance to the territorial migration services and regional EMERCOMs in Ingushetia and Dagestan. It did so recognizing that these regional versions of the FMS and emergency situations ministries were vastly overburdened by the sudden absorption of tens of thousands of IDPs. Technical assistance also was provided to the regional statistical bureaus in an effort to improve the availability and quality of information available to the aid community. Community services and protection officers of UNHCR were deployed to the frontier regions in the early stages of the crisis. UNHCR's operational partners included MSF-Belgium, Relief International, IRC, Radda Barnen, Equilibre, the North Ossetian NGO Children's Fund, the Federal EMERCOM, and the Federal Migration Service. A DHA office was established in Moscow in early 1995 to coordinate UN efforts

The UN's humanitarian activities in the frontier regions played a central role in meeting the needs of IDPs who had fled from Chechnya. UN organizations were not invited to become operational, nor, from all accounts, did they solicit an

invitation to work in Chechnya. Before the consolidated appeal was launched, UN organizations discussed among themselves whether and how they should deploy. “The debate was conducted in a climate of tremendous circumspection,” noted one UN humanitarian official.¹⁵ The prevailing sentiment was that the situation in Chechnya represented, in the words of a second, “the most highly-charged political environment” possible for a UN humanitarian operation.¹⁶ A third expressed the view that since “the UN flag has special importance and meaning,” UN humanitarian organizations should recuse themselves in order to avoid conveying a UN imprimatur on Russian policies in the conflict.¹⁷

At the time, the expectation was that the war would continue for only a few months. UN officials also expressed the view that the ICRC and NGOs would pick up the slack within Chechnya proper. The continuation of the war for more than a year, with Grozny as its cockpit, meant that the UN agencies, having acquiesced in their exclusion from Chechnya, remained on the margins of the action. When the Russian authorities in August 1996 wanted UN assistance for those uprooted by the latest upsurge in the fighting, they requested—and the UN organizations agreed to provide—emergency food assistance only to the three frontier republics and not to Chechnya itself.¹⁸ The needs of civilians still in Grozny and those displaced within Chechnya would remain exclusively the preoccupation of non-UN actors.

In retrospect, the costs of not having pressed for permission to work inside Chechnya were sizable. Anticipating resistance from the Russian authorities to any insistence on access to all of those uprooted by the conflict, UN humanitarian officials did not press the humanitarian imperative. In a setting already highly politicized, UN action, or inaction, thus accepted the Russian Federation’s exclusion of international involvement. Although some UN officials were anxious to provide assistance and protection, no available evidence suggests that UN organizations pressed Moscow for permission to work inside Chechnya at any time during the course of the war.¹⁹

Recent experiences in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the former second world highlighted the risks in

tackling the challenges of assistance within Chechnya. These experiences highlighted the risks of adopting the role of caretaker over a displaced population in an ongoing war with no mechanisms in place to prevent displacement. With the prospects for establishing such mechanisms dim, ensuring conditions for an eventual safe return of IDPs would be difficult. The recent experience in Georgia's conflicts suggested the perils to the United Nations of making the necessary judgments about the timing of the return of IDPs to Chechnya when UN humanitarian personnel were barred from the area.²⁰

In late 1994 and early 1995, the unfamiliarity of UN organizations with the terrain contributed to their collective reticence. With the exception of the former Yugoslavia, itself a new venue, agencies were geared more toward regular programming and emergency response on other continents. UNICEF had opened a small office in Moscow and was in the process of elaborating a general strategy for the FSU, but had not yet signed a basic agreement with Russia providing the ground rules for a UNICEF presence. When the crisis in Chechnya exploded, the lack of a basic agreement became an obstacle. In other emergencies to which UNICEF had responded, a preexisting basic agreement on child-oriented development assistance often served as the basis for an emergency response. Response in Chechnya entailed starting from the ground up, raising issues of comparative advantage and cost-effectiveness.

UNICEF also looked well beyond Chechnya. Until 1991, the USSR had been a contributor to the organization rather than a user of its resources. With the collapse of the Soviet system, however, the depth and breadth of socioeconomic problems and the challenges of internal armed conflicts had resulted in a virtual sea of new needs that UNICEF had difficulty evaluating and prioritizing. As a world organization active in places where the relative needs were much greater, could UNICEF and its donors take on the additional burden of the FSU?²¹ Other humanitarian agencies faced similar conundrums.

Financial constraints also worked as a deterrent to involvement. Donors had been demonstrably ambivalent

toward UN humanitarian programs in the Caucasus. Competition for the spotlight with the former Yugoslavia meant that little encouragement was forthcoming for a new UN humanitarian program in the little-known North Caucasus. If the UN were restricted to working on the sidelines of the conflict, fund-raising would be even more difficult.

If the UN's humanitarian apparatus chose not to pursue a presence inside Chechnya during the 21 months covered by this report, despite the mounting threats to the civilian population, it was not for lack of awareness of need. Two separate UN consultancies pointed out the greater scale of suffering inside Chechnya relative to that in the frontier regions. Speaking specifically to the need for psycho-social rehabilitation work among women and children, one consultant warned in late 1995, "The Chechnya tragedy is far from over. UNICEF needs to go into Chechnya as soon as permitted."²² A second consultant, in a November 1995 report to the UN's "Machel Study" on the impact of war on children, concluded that:

It becomes obvious...that effective preventive action, protection, and durable solutions for the IDP crisis...will prove impossible without the UN humanitarian agencies, especially UNHCR, having a presence in Chechnya. Otherwise, protection and assistance in place, which should be a priority concern, will not be possible. Also, the evacuation of displaced civilians under proper conditions in case of a likely intensification of the conflict will be impossible. The UN presence in neighboring republics, and the presence of other international humanitarian organizations in Chechnya as well as in neighboring territories, is not sufficient. The UN presence, therefore, is essential in Chechnya.²³

Events have amply borne out that assessment.

Local Constraints on Effective Humanitarian Action

From the earliest stages of the war, severe difficulties threatened and often prohibited independent, proportionate, and nonpartisan humanitarian activity. Aid agencies confronted the deliberate and systematic obstruction of their efforts to work in areas where the majority of IDPs had fled that were not under the control of Russian forces.

As a belligerent in the war, Russia was unable to provide adequate protection to the civilian population, especially in areas in the south where Dudayev was relatively popular. Stepping in to fill the gap, aid agencies that worked in such areas often faced accusations of circumventing myriad rules, regulations, and procedures. Appeals by aid officials to Russian military officers on behalf of the civilian population were sometimes rejected out of hand as expressions of solidarity with separatist forces rather than of humanitarian concern.

Work in separatist areas had its own set of constraints. Entry into some areas under their control was barred either by the prevailing insecurity or by the likelihood of encountering banditry en route. Separatist forces also denied humanitarian organizations the necessary access to civilians in need of assistance and protection, as evidenced by Dudayev's threats to humanitarian agencies in early 1996.

Events in the first few months of the war suggested that Russia manipulated humanitarian assistance to solidify support among pro-Moscow Chechens and to attract displaced civilians out of southern Chechnya and into areas such as Ingushetia that were more firmly—albeit precariously—under Russian control. In addition to cultivating deprivation among those who had fled to the south, this strategy put more aid in the hands of those who were apt to be less supportive of Dudayev. Pro-Moscow Chechens on the relatively unscathed northern plains also benefited.

Over the objections of some humanitarian agencies active inside Chechnya, Russia encouraged aid deliveries from the north and west. However, the most practical route for aid shipments to the south of Chechnya was through Dagestan, which had a significant pro-Dudayev Chechen minority on

the frontier. Shortly after the war began, humanitarian shipments moving in this direction were seriously obstructed in Moscow and at the Dagestan/Chechnya border. The ICRC was able to get convoys through only after considerable delays and high-level pressure in Moscow and Geneva.²⁴ UN assessment teams also experienced major delays in Moscow in obtaining authorization to travel to Dagestan.

In the prevailing hysteria of the first two months of the war, many Chechens feared another mass deportation. Civilians in areas under the control of pro-Dudayev fighters were warned in the Russian media to evacuate through corridors of dubious safety. On December 19, 1994, the FMS announced that accommodation for the displaced had been arranged in southern and central Russia. A decree was issued the next day banning cross-border movements into Azerbaijan and Georgia, preventing those in flight from crossing international boundaries and becoming refugees under international law. In early February, local FMS offices in Russia were instructed not to register citizens of Chechen nationality as "refugees," thus depriving ethnic Chechens of the right to official attention and aid. Russians who had fled the war would not be affected, underscoring the politicization of the official approach to displacement.²⁵

These events augured poorly for what was to come. Despite the best efforts of a small number of agencies experienced in Chechnya, the trend that prevailed in the humanitarian effort at the time of writing was away from meeting needs in situ, and toward dealing with the effects of the war on its periphery. The centrifugal action of the war, which returned repeatedly to Grozny and the rural areas of the south, ran counter to the centripetal motion of humanitarian action, which gravitated toward the frontier republics.

The dynamics behind the trend toward the periphery of the conflict were many and varied. Some agencies, struggling to keep their operations going in Grozny, felt that the much greater humanitarian activity in the frontier regions drew focus and funding away from an already isolated Chechnya. One aid worker expressed the concern bluntly by saying, "You're faking it by working in Ingushetia or Dagestan."

The United Nations' absence from Chechnya was most problematic. As noted earlier, the consolidated appeal for 1996 did not assess the humanitarian situation facing the population that remained inside Chechnya, nor did it request for funds for that group.²⁶ Indeed, the text of the appeal was fundamentally misleading, stating without substantiation that the majority of IDPs from the conflict were concentrated in the three frontier republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia.²⁷ The absence of funds mobilized for Chechnya itself was critical. One well-known NGO decided to pull out from Chechnya and the region because a lack of funding for work inside Chechnya.

The role of the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) and a small number of bilateral donors was important. ECHO followed a policy of giving priority to funding humanitarian activity inside Chechnya. Preference in EU funding went to agencies that were experienced in the region such as the ICRC, MSF, and MERLIN. ECHO allocated a total of about \$24 million to Chechnya and the frontier regions in 1995. UN agencies decried the lack of funding for their programming in the frontier regions, but there is evidence to suggest that donor ambivalence was in part a function of the UN's failure to address needs inside Chechnya.

Formidable administrative and bureaucratic obstacles to independent and proportionate humanitarian activity also contributed to a shift toward the periphery. In Chechnya and Moscow, aid agency activities worked with a bewildering array of civilian and military authorities that still used procedures left over from Soviet days. The most common complaint concerned the mandatory *propiska*, or travel document, required for movement inside Chechnya. Routinely checked at Russian checkpoints, these were used to place limits on where and when humanitarian activity could take place. Valid for only two weeks, often they were not issued until less than a few days prior to their expiry. Obtaining a *propiska* involved a time-consuming journey through a labyrinth of different branches of the Chechen Territorial Administration, security services, and the Russian military. If and when issued, a *propiska* was no guarantee of access or freedom of movement. Soldiers at one checkpoint often would not recognize the

validity of documents that had just been used to pass through several others.

Russian customs officials presented another major obstacle, leading one small agency to draft and circulate a *5-Minute Guide to Russian Bureaucracy*. It was common for aid shipments to be detained by customs officials for weeks or months while awaiting clearance. According to some aid workers, these delays originated partly in corruption and the expectation of bribes and partly in attempts to control the provision of aid. Shipments of drugs and medical supplies were the most problematic and also the favored targets of bandits. At least one agency steered clear of medical programming altogether for this reason, a testimony to the success of the authorities in frustrating humanitarian action.

Agencies were confronted across-the-board with a lack of awareness of the humanitarian ethos, the consequences of which cannot be overstated. In a climate of suspicion, the absence of even a minimal understanding of humanitarian and NGO activity made negotiations for humanitarian access or appeals on behalf of civilians an extremely laborious process, with outcomes never assured. Blurred chains of command among combatants and a lack of accountability among military and civilian authorities complicated such efforts further. Authorities at all levels repeatedly demonstrated a propensity for entering into agreements and understandings with humanitarian agencies or to establish procedures that were then ignored or used to impede humanitarian activity further. The "Catch-22" scenario was familiar. An officer at the command headquarters of Russian forces in Chechnya, for example, had liaison duties with humanitarian organizations. However, to see the officer, agencies required a letter from the commanding general. To see the commanding general, however, arrangements could only be made by the liaison officer.

The combined impact of such constraints and worsening insecurity forced many agencies to cease operations in Chechnya either temporarily or permanently, particularly in the first six months of 1996. After withdrawing first to Ingushetia, IOM ceased humanitarian operations completely in May. MSF was forced to suspend activities in Chechnya after two expatriate staff were taken hostage. As indicated

earlier, the ICRC, responding to threats against personnel and programs, temporarily reduced its staff in Grozny.

Comparative Advantages

Faced with the untoward political-security environment and the array of local constraints on their activities, humanitarian organizations often had little recourse other than patience. Despite the absence of ready solutions to the prevailing obstacles, however, some agencies were more resourceful than others in coping. Some managed to cultivate useful relationships with helpful officials, many of whom respected conservatism and a diplomatic approach, however antithetical to prompt action in a dynamic war environment. By contrast, agencies that tried to circumvent the requisite channels were sometimes singled out for special harassment. Some found their freedom of movement further restricted and threats to their safety increased.

Smaller agencies found it particularly difficult to cope with the onerous administrative and bureaucratic constraints working inside Chechnya, where limited logistics capacities were often overwhelmed by rapidly unfolding events. For all agencies, security conditions required sound safety guidelines for staff, good communications, high degrees of humanitarian professionalism and political acumen, and adept political and administrative backing that was fully attuned to evolving field conditions. Flexibility was a key requirement for all operations in Chechnya. One small agency was able to continue effective work in Grozny despite appalling security conditions by leaving a bare-bones logistics capacity in the homes of local staff and by sending expatriate staff to Grozny, as required, on day-trips from Ingushetia. A representative of a larger humanitarian organization pointed out that even marginally successful work inside Chechnya needed a multifaceted presence in Moscow, Ingushetia, Dagestan, and southern Russia, all in support of off-again, on-again operations.

All agencies spoke highly of their local staffs. Local women generally could finesse Russian checkpoints better than men, while men were generally more successful in dealing with the various government bureaucracies. A prevailing male-female

division of labor in the North Caucasus and Chechnya, in particular, would not sustain much uninformed tampering by outsiders. One male expatriate social worker stressed the need to be aware of gender sensitivities. With some exceptions, local men tended not to take on teaching or child-care roles. Women tended to be better educated than men, making them preferred employees. However, it was common for Chechen women, especially those among the IDP population, to be badly beaten or threatened with death by male family members for associating with foreign males through their work. In spite of these constraints, skilled, educated, and dedicated local people were readily available. Ethnic Chechen, Ingush, Russian, and Georgian local staff were represented among the various humanitarian agencies.

The few Russian and Caucasian NGOs that responded to the conflict performed numerous roles. Some local groups were humanitarian fronts for political activity. Most Caucasian groups had clan affiliations leading to potential problems in the area of impartiality. Similarly, some Russian humanitarian NGOs were criticized for providing assistance only to war-affected Russians. Overall, however, the larger picture was more positive. Chechen and Ingush Red Cross organizations cooperated with the ICRC and other international agencies in major relief programs. These and other indigenous groups performed vital roles in keeping assistance programs going, often under great personal risk to staff, when expatriate presence was considered too dangerous. In addition, partnerships with local organizations provided a ready-made pool of local expertise and knowledge, vital in the unfamiliar and politically-charged environment of the North Caucasus.

Women's organizations showed particular vitality. By virtue of their greater access to areas under Russian cordon or separatist control, loosely-knit women's groups in Chechnya were able to undertake valuable but dangerous roles by documenting human rights abuses with video cameras, and by forwarding the material to Moscow-based or international human rights organizations. However, despite strong potential, assistance to fledgling local NGOs was rarely a priority for international aid. A notable exception—perhaps even something of a model for such assistance—was the work of the

Quaker-based Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development, which sought modest funding and provided capacity-building assistance for local groups throughout the North Caucasus. Some of the groups the center worked with served as bridges between communities, bringing together individuals and groups from among the IDP populations from Chechnya and Prigorodnyi, refugees from South Ossetia, mothers of Russian soldiers, residents of Grozny, and people from throughout the FSU. Comprised of locals, these organizations were sometimes able to gain access to afflicted areas of Chechnya where and when outside agencies were systematically denied entry.

Given the prevailing suspicion of outsiders and the evident promise of local organizations, capacity-building assistance for local NGOs was an under-served area in the humanitarian response, particularly in the frontier regions where it was more possible. Against the backdrop of pervasive underdevelopment, vulnerabilities among IDP and local communities pointed to the need to build capacities for finding local solutions to problems emerging from neglected community development, such as management and administration, health and nutrition, and teacher training and curriculum development.²⁸ Figure 1 in the previous chapter suggests other promising areas for the allocation of resources.

Some outside agencies, notably MSF and the ICRC, had the advantage of prior familiarity with the area through humanitarian activity associated with the Prigorodnyi conflict. This familiarity allowed for rapid expansion with the outbreak of war in Chechnya. An ICRC regional delegation had been opened in Moscow in 1992, and a North Caucasus office based in Kabardino Balkaria followed in 1993.

IOM also had a previous history in the area through a preexisting partnership with the Russian FMS, dating back to 1990 to provide material and migration assistance for the several million Russians leaving outlying areas of the FSU. IOM's prewar programming in Russia also extended to capacity-building assistance for Russian migrants through its Direct Assistance Program and a Technical Cooperation program providing advisory and capacity-building assistance to government authorities. Through this latter work, IOM had

developed close relationships with central and regional offices of the FMS, as well as important expertise in the vagaries of Russian logistics. IOM's comparative advantages included its ability to assist without (as would have been the case with UNHCR involvement) implicitly conferring refugee status on IDPs.

Access and other limitations were dealt with in different ways by different agencies, sometimes reflecting the comparative advantages and sometimes the operational principles they brought to their work. The ICRC treated access as an issue of principle occasioned by operational challenges. It therefore did not hesitate to press its case as the situation warranted by appeals to international humanitarian law throughout the Russian and separatist chains of command. When this failed, as it often did, the ICRC's quasi-diplomatic status allowed it to seek redress at high levels in Moscow and Geneva. In addition, having well-defined and time-tested structures and procedures in place ensured that the ICRC could support its operational presence in Chechnya by running effective political and administrative interference in Moscow and Geneva.

For IOM, access was approached more operationally. Its close affiliation with the FMS facilitated sorting out difficulties with known counterparts. Most of IOM's field staff in Chechnya were either former military officers or serving in the military. Some of the staff also had experience as military observers in other conflicts in the FSU. Thanks to the resulting advantage when dealing with military authorities on both sides, they were often able to negotiate low-level access where other agencies had been thwarted. IOM consciously avoided activities that had the potential to antagonize one party or the other, choosing to stress its logistical capacity and not to voice concerns on human rights issues.

IOM's approach and activities sparked some concern among NGOs in the region. Although its effectiveness in gaining access to civilian populations and its expertise in arranging evacuations was acknowledged, some NGOs expressed reservations about the level of humanitarian expertise in other areas of IOM's activities that related to food and medical relief assistance. In addition, IOM's affiliation with the FMS raised questions in some quarters about the impartiality of its work.

In reality, however, IOM sought to nurture low-level contacts with officials on both sides of the conflict and preferred to turn humanitarian work over to other agencies whenever they could gain sufficient access.

Larger programming goals in Russia and concerns over field staff safety led to an IOM decision in Geneva to cancel North Caucasus operations in May 1996. IOM's field staff were clearly disappointed, feeling that their comparative advantage in the area would not be present in other agencies. By this time, IOM was performing a de facto proxy role for UNHCR in assisting the populations of western Chechen towns that had come under attack. UNHCR previously had been forced to suspend assistance to the town of Sernovodsk—formerly considered to be part of Ingushetia—after it was barred by Russian military authorities. IOM was able to take up the slack in this instance as one of the few agencies still active inside Chechnya in early 1996. IOM's departure was destined to result in a further lack of protection for civilians in the area.

MSF's approach to local constraints combined efforts to gain access at a local level with appeals to the Russian chain of command and other authorities. The medical nature of MSF's work dictated considerable freedom of movement without delay, requirements that elicited considerable suspicion in Chechnya. In addition, MSF's commitment to flag human rights abuses created problems with authorities. However, it considered advocacy of such importance that it was willing, if need be, to curtail its operational activities accordingly.

The ICRC and MSF utilized local and international media on numerous occasions to call attention to limitations of humanitarian access and violations of human rights. The ICRC also embarked on an imaginative program of public education through the media aimed at disseminating the principles of international humanitarian law among combatants and potential beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance. As one ICRC official observed in commenting on its dissemination activities in the public schools, "It's too late to start teaching about humanitarian law to a young conscript."

Summary

In sum, the international humanitarian response to the Chechnya conflict receives mixed reviews. On the positive side, a range of urgently needed forms of assistance were provided by many agencies to Chechens displaced by the conflict in the three frontier republics of Ingushetia, Dagestan, and North Ossetia. Within Chechnya, only a few organizations with prior experience in such conflicts sought to provide emergency assistance to those displaced from Grozny and from homes elsewhere in the republic. A division of labor evolved that relied on the comparative advantage of various groups, although on balance the allocation of available resources was not proportionate to the incidence of need. Considering the formidable obstacles, the efforts deserve commendation.

On the negative side, international humanitarian action failed to help those most in need of protection and assistance, a reality confirmed by the 30,000-40,000 deaths associated with the conflict. Taking place in the former Soviet Union at a time when high-level political priorities were allowed to upstage humanitarian claims on international action, the response suffered from the lack of a political-security framework that only governments could provide. Political shortcomings by such organizations as the United Nations and the OSCE were compounded by the failure of the UN's humanitarian apparatus to engage in Chechnya proper, or even to assist less politically constrained humanitarian actors to do so. Also missing was a concerted and multifaceted strategy for dealing with the constraints thrown up by local authorities who had few humanitarian pretensions or predilections. Achievements in assistance were offset by serious shortcomings in protection.

Although the balance sheet is negative, the experience of responding to the Chechnya conflict is rich with lessons for the future, both in the conflict in the North Caucasus and beyond. These lessons form the substance of the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations that emerge from the preceding analysis are directed to the international community and to the regional, national, and local actors in the conflict.

Nurturing a Humanitarian Ethos

Responding successfully to urgent need in a conflict waged without humanitarian pretensions is bound to be frustrating and perhaps even ultimately impossible. The abuses of human rights and of life itself, and the targeted and random obstruction of humanitarian activities and personnel are profoundly disturbing. As long as efforts to assist civilians are viewed with deep suspicion by political-military actors, the internationally recognized right to receive and to provide humanitarian assistance will have only limited value. The lack of understanding of the role of humanitarian action in general and NGOs in particular is so deep-seated that only the organic spread of notions of civil society is likely to have any impact in the medium-term future.

The absence of a humanitarian ethos in Chechnya and environs is only one aspect of the daunting challenges facing areas such as the North Caucasus that are vulnerable to post-Soviet instability and upheaval. Due to the lack of confidence engendered by Soviet values and society, education and dissemination activities and measures aimed at strengthening civil society should be bolstered as one means of averting humanitarian crises in the future. Since the resulting change is likely to be slow, it is incumbent upon all international actors, including aid organizations, to begin the uphill task of attitudinal transformation, building an awareness of the humanitarian ethos, and assisting in the formation of post-Soviet civil society.

In the short term, the ICRC should seek increased support for dissemination activities throughout the North Caucasus and in the Russian Ministries of Defense and Interior. NGOs should factor into their strategic planning the increased need

for advocacy and public education: in operational areas in the region, in Moscow, and among donors and the public. Linkages between international NGOs and local or Moscow-based NGOs have been effective by helping to bridge cultural gaps and encouraging a two-way flow of information. Specifically, international NGOs that have abstained from outspoken advocacy for fear of jeopardizing their personnel and programs have voiced their concerns through like-minded local organizations, whose criticisms have been less provocative in Russian and Caucasian cultural contexts. The legacies of the Soviet system, combined with political instability and war, have interfered with the evolution of indigenous capacities for self-organization and humanitarian activity, but real potential exists for the development of effective indigenous NGOs. Where possible, aid agencies should work more closely with them and engender their growth.

Some state-sponsored organizations have demonstrated a willingness to work more closely with international organizations in building their own capacities, notably the regional migration services, EMERCOM, and the Federal Ministry of Health. In consultation with operational humanitarian agencies, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should proffer capacity-building assistance to these state organs as part of a multifaceted effort to nurture an awareness of the humanitarian ethos and the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to effective and timely humanitarian action.

Promoting a Political-Security Environment Conducive to Humanitarian Action

Many of the shortcomings of humanitarian action in the months since the Russian invasion can be ascribed to the lack of a political-security environment needed for effective humanitarian action, either at the international level or in the conflict theater. At the international level, the prevailing tendency to acquiesce in Russia's management of the crisis rather than pressing to uphold international law and the rules of war (to which the Russian Federation is a signatory) has undoubtedly cost thousands of lives, increased the intractability of the war, and risked its expansion into neighboring republics. The

repeated and flagrant denial of humanitarian access by Russian and, to a lesser extent, separatist military forces, and their combined harassment of humanitarian operations and personnel within the region has hobbled effective international action. The Chechnya conflict has highlighted the dangers inherent in tackling an ongoing humanitarian emergency where no political / security framework exists that can expand the space for humanitarian activity and address the causes of the emergency.

With the Russian presidential election past, one major impediment to effective and concrete international action has been removed. However, there are still political considerations for key international players that may temper willingness to exert effective leverage on the Russian Federation in support of humanitarian action and conflict resolution in the North Caucasus. These considerations include the perceived importance of Russian cooperation on a wide range of priority concerns, including arms control, the expansion of NATO, and western policy toward Bosnia. Without discounting the importance of such matters, it remains critical that the relative priority of humanitarian considerations be upgraded in international dealings with the Russian Federation. For example, the war in Chechnya and Russia's role in it should be considered in decisions about numerous matters of interest to the federation, including bilateral and multilateral financial assistance.

At a more operational level, a fundamental change is needed in the political-security umbrella under which humanitarian activities are carried out in the region. A dramatic increase in the number of OSCE observers in Chechnya is indispensable for helping to create conditions for assisting and protecting the civilian population. Humanitarian organizations are unanimous in identifying limitations on access as a major obstacle to their work inside Chechnya. With Russia itself showing initial signs of seeking international assistance for meeting urgent needs in Chechnya, outside aid should be made contingent upon the necessary access to civilian populations and, to ensure continued access, on the establishment of an effective political-security umbrella. To show seriousness of intent, all authorities and parties to the conflict should

be pressed to agree in advance to international assessments of need and monitoring of developments, and to grant the required freedom of movement and administrative/logistical support to aid agencies throughout the areas to be served.

Achieving Proportionality in Resource Allocations

A fundamental humanitarian principle involves the allocation of resources in response to the relative severity of human need.¹ The experience in the Chechnya conflict is largely negative in this respect. Throughout the various phases of the conflict, international agencies have found it difficult or impossible to provide protection and assistance at the points and the times of maximum need. Because of the well-documented obstacles of working in Grozny and Chechnya, aid agencies—including those who sought to work where the need has been greatest—have gravitated to the periphery, where they have provided effective assistance to the displaced. Chechnya's loss has been Ingushetia's and Dagestan's gain, with aid efforts in the frontier areas reinforced accordingly.

The needs in Chechnya itself, however, continue to require attention on an urgent basis. Damage to essential infrastructure and housing, a nonexistent health system, the presence of an unknown quantity of land mines, interrupted agricultural activity, and severely diminished local food reserves are some of the central life-threatening needs requiring in-depth review and response by humanitarian agencies.

Maximizing the Comparative Advantages within the Family of Humanitarian Organizations

In the withering struggle to provide protection and assistance to civilians affected by the Chechnya conflict, the strengths and weaknesses of the major humanitarian actors—the agencies of the United Nations, ICRC, IOM, and NGOs—have emerged. During the past months, the ICRC has made major contributions have been in humanitarian diplomacy, public education, and emergency relief activities in Chechnya. IOM has provided indispensable evacuation assistance. NGOs have

provided critically needed medical and other relief assistance. Despite positive showing in these respects, the overall effort has fallen far short of requirements and expectations.

Several recommendations suggest themselves in this area. First, individual humanitarian actors should concentrate on tasks in which they have a comparative advantage. That is, the ICRC's efforts in the dissemination of humanitarian law should be reinforced at all levels. IOM in Moscow should work with FMS to ensure the legal protection of persons displaced by the conflict. IOM should also maintain a watching brief on the situation in Chechnya and should be prepared to resume assistance in the North Caucasus when conditions are conducive to safe return and resettlement of the displaced population. NGOs should continue to use their presence by doing more to facilitate and reinforce local efforts. In particular, NGOs should work in ways that strengthen the positions of local elders, clergy, and other community organizations marginalized by the war.

Second, the UN's disarray requires urgent attention and redress. The integrity of the UN's humanitarian apparatus is seriously compromised if political obstacles to humanitarian action remain unchallenged. At the policy level, UNDHA should act on its humanitarian mandate within the UN system, taking the lead in making representations to the highest levels of the Russian and other governments on behalf of humanitarian efforts in Chechnya. In partnership with other UN departments, DHA should work to secure Russia's commitment to an improved political, administrative, and security environment for humanitarian action. DHA should work to establish the view that humanitarian assistance can be provided without conferring political recognition or approbation on one or another set of authorities.

Changes are also urgently needed at the more operational level. UN agencies should be cognizant of the dangers of diverting attention and funding away from the humanitarian extremity of civilians inside Chechnya by working exclusively on the periphery of the conflict. A UN consolidated appeal that excludes serious funding for Chechnya itself makes a mockery of the UN as a humanitarian instrument.² In light of the ongoing displacement of the civilian population and serious

deficiencies of protection inside Chechnya, UN organizations—most notably UNHCR and UNICEF—should reexamine their decisions not to pursue a presence and rethink the possibility of becoming directly operational as soon as conditions permit. UNHCR has an important role to play in protection activities and early warning of further population movements and will be indispensable for the management of an eventual safe return and resettlement of Chechnya's displaced population. UNICEF should put into place an advocacy-oriented program through work on behalf of its existing activities called Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, building on its previous experience and successes in the frontier regions and elsewhere.

Third, if and when a definitive settlement to the conflict is achieved, many humanitarian organizations may express interest in mounting operations. They should be aware of the formidable challenges, including the effects of the war and of prewar instability, organized crime and disorder, 70 years of Soviet infrastructure and culture, and an idiosyncratic Caucasian culture. With such considerations in mind, priority in the near future should be given to reinforcing the work of existing organizations rather than mounting altogether new operations. The security environment puts a premium on developing and maintaining a concerted humanitarian community-wide strategy for dealing with the political-military authorities. The ICRC, intimately familiar with the lay of the land, may be in a position to provide counsel, even though it may not become a part of formal coordination structures. Humanitarian organizations should strive for as much transparency as possible as one means of counteracting the suspicion with which their activities are typically met.

Giving Higher Priority to Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

Recent experience indicates a paucity of creative international efforts to bring the conflict to an end and to promote forces of reconciliation. The experiences of the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development and MEDAIR are evidence of the strong potential for cultivation of local,

grassroots approaches to reconciliation in the region. Efforts at this level are important for the maintenance of stability in the North Caucasus and will be more important in Chechnya following the eventual end of military activity.

At other levels and in other quarters, OSCE member states in particular should take assertive diplomatic measures to secure a peaceful settlement, facilitated and verified by a politically and numerically strengthened OSCE presence. Plans should be reviewed to place regional offices of the OSCE Assistance Group in Ingushetia and Dagestan, but should be contingent on an increase in the number of OSCE observers. The OSCE should recognize that it cannot pursue mutually-exclusive goals in Chechnya, (for example, mediation between combatants, on the one hand, and effective human rights advocacy, on the other) without jeopardizing its effectiveness and credibility. It should thus limit its activity to the political sphere and the creation of conditions conducive to the protection of the civilian population.

The Council of Europe, through its Ad-Hoc Committee on Chechnya, should shoulder the primary burden for ongoing human rights monitoring and reporting in Chechnya in accordance with COE Order No. 508 (1995), which deals with honoring obligations and commitments by member states. Moreover, the COE should give more serious consideration to exercising its option to suspend Russia's membership until human rights performance improves in the North Caucasus.

Taking a Regional Approach to the Humanitarian Challenge

An analysis of the war and humanitarian need reveals the interconnectedness of the North Caucasus as a region. Events in Chechnya have affected seriously neighboring republics, where the legacy of forced migration lives on and where ongoing influxes of displaced persons from Chechnya threaten to destabilize delicate interethnic relations and social systems. As events in Dagestan demonstrated in early 1996, the region's vulnerabilities are prone to manipulation from outside.

In addition, the same social, political, and economic conditions that led to war in Chechnya are duplicated in varying

degrees throughout the North Caucasus. Yet the area does not receive an adequate claim on the international resources to prevent and contain outbreaks of violence. The immense challenge of mounting effective humanitarian responses to war in the region make the exigencies of conflict prevention all the more urgent. There is no substitute for a regional approach in this volatile area.

Ingushetia's absorption of tens of thousands of additional displaced persons from Chechnya and North Ossetia's refugee population from the conflict in Georgia have placed additional pressures on relations between the two republics and their peoples. There is an urgent need for preventive action to be taken in Prigorodnyi Raion to forestall a resumption of hostilities.

Aid agencies active in Ingushetia should continue to assist the population affected by the Prigorodnyi conflict alongside their assistance to those displaced from Chechnya. Persons uprooted as a result of conflict in Prigorodnyi and South Ossetia have been awaiting return to their respective homes for several years, but have few resources committed to this process.

The OSCE should solicit the support of Russia and other member states to explore the potential for an OSCE mission in Prigorodnyi. Provided that it is furnished with the necessary political support, there may be a role for the OSCE in helping to ease tensions and facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict. A broader objective of the OSCE and other international organizations should be to strengthen the local capacities of North Caucasian institutions, working in particular on conflict resolution, reform of legal systems, and human rights.

There are strong parallels between the Prigorodnyi conflict and resulting population displacement and similar challenges in Georgia to the south. Agencies involved with community-based reconciliation activities and those working with potential returnees in both of these areas should be encouraged to adopt a more regional focus, sharing lessons learned, encouraging the cross-fertilization of approaches, and investigating the benefits of regional programs. With presence and interests in both situations, UNHCR has the capacity to serve as a constructive link. Other agencies such

as International Alert and Nonviolence International also have roles to play in this regard and should be supported accordingly.

ENDNOTES

Preface

¹Estimates of civilian casualties vary widely from source to source and are a matter of highly politicized debate. In September 1996, Russian National Security Advisor Alexander Lebed expressed his view that the number of those killed was “more than 80,000.” For the purposes of this study, we have used casualty estimates obtained from humanitarian agencies that have maintained a presence in Chechnya since the war began.

Introduction

¹François Jean, “The Problems of Medical Relief in the Chechen War Zone,” *Central Asian Survey* 15, no. 2 (1996).

²For an exploration of the sovereignty issue, see Richard Falk, “Human Rights, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Sovereignty of States,” in Kevin M. Cahill (ed.), *A Framework for Survival: Health, Human Rights, and Humanitarian Assistance in Conflicts and Disasters* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993): 27-41; and Thomas G. Weiss and Jarat Chopra, “Sovereignty Under Siege: From Intervention to Humanitarian Space,” in Gene M. Lyons and Michael Mastanduno (eds.), *Beyond Westphalia? State Sovereignty and International Intervention* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995): 87-114.

³Communication with Catherine Fitzpatrick, Committee to Protect Journalists, August 1996.

⁴Before his second visit to Chechnya and subsequent disappearance, Cuny had written an article critical of Russia’s prosecution of the war. After an investigation conducted in Ingushetia and Chechnya, members of Cuny’s family determined that the Russian FSB had spread disinformation in the conflict zone alleging Cuny was a CIA agent, leading to his death and the deaths of his team members at the hands of the Chechen separatist leadership. See Frederick C. Cuny, “Killing Chechnya,” *The New York Review* (April 6, 1995), 15-17. See also William Shawcross, “A Hero of Our Time,” *The New York Review* (November 30, 1995), 35-39.

Chapter 1

¹UNHCR estimated that approximately 3.6 million people are currently displaced in the FSU as a result of conflict. Another 1.2

million await return to the homelands they were forcibly expelled from during the Stalinist deportations of 1944. An additional 700,000 are classed as “ecological migrants” who have fled natural and technological disasters such as Chernobyl. Some 4.2 million ethnic Slavs are on the move from inhospitable conditions in Russia’s Central Asian Republics and the newly-independent states of the CIS. Reuters headline announced, “UN Says 9 Million on the Move,” May 22, 1996.

²Edward Kline, “The Conflict in Chechnya,” unpublished briefing paper for the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, March 24, 1995. Cited with permission of the author.

³Suzanne Goldenberg, *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder* (London: Zed Books, 1994): 5.

⁴Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria were similarly dissolved.

⁵Goldenberg, *Pride of Small Nations*, 198.

⁶Kline, “The Conflict in Chechnya,” 7.

⁷Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *The Ingush-Ossetian conflict in the Prigorodnyi Region* (Helsinki: Human Rights Watch, 1996): 11. The Human Rights Watch/Helsinki report is a thoroughly documented review of events surrounding intercommunal conflict in the Prigorodnyi region between 1990-1995. For a review of events surrounding the displacement of Ossetians from the SOAO, see S. Neil MacFarlane, Larry Minear, and Stephen D. Shenfield, *Armed Conflict in Georgia: A Case Study in Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping*, Occasional Paper #21 (Providence, R.I.: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1996).

⁸According to Memorial and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, as of mid-1994 there were 43,168 refugees from the SOAO conflict living in North Ossetia. Of these, 16,000 lived in Prigorodnyi. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *The Ingush*, 24-25.

⁹*Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰The border between Ingushetia and Chechnya remains undefined. In an interview in Slepsovskaya in April 1996, an IDP from Sernovodsk (considered in 1995 to be a village inside Ingushetia), was asked how one knew what was Chechnya and what was Ingushetia. He replied: “If it’s being bombed, it’s Chechnya.”

¹¹Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *The Ingush*, 62-72.

¹²*Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹³Kline, “The Conflict in Chechnya,” 1.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵Conversation with John Colarusso, professor of anthropology, McMaster University, Canada.

¹⁶COVCAS *Bulletin* 4, no. 24 (December 21, 1994), 3.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸COVCAS *Bulletin* 4, no. 24 (December 21, 1994), 5. See also Michael R. Lucas, "The War in Chechnya and the OSCE Code of Conduct," *Helsinki Monitor* 2 (1995). The OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security has as its central aim the prevention of the misuse of military force to achieve political ends. It complements rather than supplants other bodies of international law regulating the use of force. The OSCE is a consensual body.

¹⁹COVCAS *Bulletin* 4, no. 24 (December 21, 1994), 9.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

²¹*Ibid.*, 19.

²²Kline, "The Conflict in Chechnya," 11.

²³See Mary B. Anderson and Peter J. Woodrow, *Rising from the Ashes: Development Strategies in Times of Disaster* (Boulder: Westview, 1989).

²⁴Sources: interviews in Chechnya and Ingushetia, April 1996. Also Leslie McTyre, "Final Report: Mission to Daghestan, North Ossetia and Ingushetia," April 27-31, December 1995, unpublished Report to UNICEF, cited with permission of the author.

²⁵COVCAS *Bulletin* 4, no. 24 (December 21, 1994).

²⁶*Ibid.*, 29.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 40.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 40.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 31.

³¹Conversation with ICRC Delegate General for Eastern Europe, July 1996.

³²Cuny, "Killing Chechnya," 15.

³³Cited in Hrair Balian, *Armed Conflict in Chechnya: Its Impact on Children—A Case Study for the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, November 1995, 12.

³⁴ICRC, Press Release no. 1795, *ICRC President Meets Russian Foreign Minister*, January 17, 1995; ICRC, "Chechnya: ICRC Reiterates Requests for Humanitarian Truce," *ICRC News* 5 (February 1, 1995).

³⁵OSCE, *Chairman's Statement on the Situation in the Republic of Chechnya, Russian Federation* (OSCE Permanent Council, Vienna, January 12, 1995).

³⁶COVCAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (February 15, 1994), 30, 34, 40.

³⁷ICRC, "Chechnya: ICRC Operations Stepped Up," *ICRC News* (January 12, 1995).

³⁸COVCAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (January 18, 1995), 34.

³⁹COVCAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 5 (March 1, 1995), 12.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 9.

⁴¹Interviews in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Moscow, April 1996; and OSCE Assistance Group to Chechnya, *Unofficial Translation of Protocol*, March 23, 1996.

⁴²Interview in Moscow, April 1996.

⁴³See Sergei Kovalyev, A. Blinushov, et al., *By All Available Means: The Russian Federation Ministry of Internal Affairs Operation in the Village of Samashki, April 7-8, 1995 (Results of Independent Research by the Observer Mission of Human Rights and Public Organizations in the Conflict Zone in Chechnya)*, (Memorial, 1995); and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia: Partisan War in Chechnya on the Eve of the WWII Commemoration* 7, no. 8 (May 1995).

⁴⁴*Ibid.* Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has documented the complicity of MVD and OMON troops in many of the worst excesses of the war.

⁴⁵Kovalyev, *By All Available Means*, and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia*.

⁴⁶In the past year, a song that recounts the story of the "Samashki Massacre" has become popular among Chechens. During our visit in April 1996, a ritual grieving ceremony was held among IDPs from Samashki to commemorate the first anniversary of the same events.

⁴⁷On some occasions, elders in other Chechen villages were able to negotiate agreements with local Russian and pro-Dudayev commanders to leave their villages alone. These "zones of peace" were under tremendous pressure, however, and all were short-lived. Chechen fighters would insist on shelter, or the Russian commander would be changed. See Voice of America report by Joan Beecher, dateline Moscow, February 26, 1996. Substantiated in interviews in Chechnya and Ingushetia, April 1996.

⁴⁸See Memorial Human Rights Center, *Conditions in Detention in Chechen Republic Conflict Zone: Treatment of Detainees* (Moscow: Memorial Human Rights Center, 1995) for a well-documented report on conditions in filtration camps.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰ICRC, "Chechnya: Aid Distributed in the Village of Samashki," *ICRC News* 18 (May 9, 1995).

⁵¹"Chechnya: Vast Humanitarian Needs," *ICRC News* 17 (April 26, 1995).

⁵²UNDHA, *Update to the United Nations Inter-Agency Appeal for Persons Displaced as a Result of the Emergency Situation in Chechnya, Russian Federation, 1 January-31 December, 1995*, (July 1995), 16.

⁵³ICRC, "Chechnya: ICRC Opens Office in Shali," *ICRC News* 6 (February 9, 1995); ICRC, "Chechnya: Two ICRC Convoys Reach Chatoi and Noyayurt Hospitals," *ICRC Press Release* 95/9, April 1, 1995; and ICRC, "Chechnya: ICRC Operational in All Areas Except the South-East," *ICRC News* 14 (April 5, 1995).

⁵⁴OSCE Doc. REF.PC/24/95/Rev.2 (April 11, 1995).

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia, Chechnya and Daghestan*:

Caught in the Crossfire—Civilians in Gudermes and Pervomaiskoye 8, no. 3D (March 1996), 98.

⁵⁷UNDHA, *Update*, 7, 17.

⁵⁸ICRC: "Chechnya: ICRC Tailors Its Operation to Fit the Situation," *ICRC News* 30 (July 26, 1995).

⁵⁹Rieks H. J. Smeets and Egbert G. Wesselink, *Chechnya: One Year of War—A Pax Christi Report*, (Pax Christi/Dutch Interchurch Aid, December 11, 1995), 23.

⁶⁰COCVAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 20 (October 25, 1995), 1.

⁶¹ICRC, *North Caucasus / Chechnya*, December 5, 1995.

⁶²Interviews in Ingushetia and Moscow, April 1996.

⁶³One respected agency was accused by Russian authorities of transporting pro-Dudayev fighters. Interviews in Nazran and Grozny, April 1996.

⁶⁴Interview with agency representative, June 1996.

⁶⁵ICRC, "Northern Caucasus-Chechnya: An Ominous Turn for the Worse," *ICRC News* 50 (December 13, 1995). By July 1996, the ICRC had records of over 1,000 soldiers and civilians who had required amputation of a limb, the majority caused by mine injuries. See ICRC, Russian Federation/Northern Caucasus, *Factsheet*, July 17, 1996. The team heard reports during the field visit of air-scatterable anti-personnel mines being in wide use by Russian forces as part of their pattern of encirclement of towns and villages.

⁶⁶Lawrence Sheets, "Chechen Dudayev Promises Russia 'New Stage' of War," Reuters, December 13, 1995.

⁶⁷Interviews with aid agency personnel in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia, April 1996.

⁶⁸Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia, Chechnya and Daghestan*, 11-22.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 11-22, 26-27.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 27-28.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, and ICRC, *Update No. 4 on Activities in Chechnya*, December 29, 1995.

⁷²*Ibid.* Human Rights Watch/Helsinki also gathered accounts from IDPs from Gudermes who claimed that pro-Dudayev fighters also failed to warn civilians to evacuate when they had opportunity to make it known that an attack was imminent. Several hundred civilians were presumed killed.

⁷³Interviews conducted with aid workers who were in the area at the time suggest that Daghestani authorities wanted to contain this incident by handling it themselves. Negotiations were reportedly going well until the arrival of Federal forces.

⁷⁴Michael Specter, "Strife in Chechnya Embroils a Neighbouring People," *New York Times News Service*, January 14, 1996.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶Cited in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia*, 30.

⁷⁷This was substantiated by a UNICEF consultant who was in the area during the crisis, interviewed in June 1996.

⁷⁸Interview with UNHCR official in Moscow, April 1996.

⁷⁹Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia*, 28. See also ICRC, "North Caucasus: ICRC Stalled in Chechnya," *ICRC News* 96, no. 3 (January 25, 1996).

⁸⁰Associated Press, *Russian Armour, Artillery Move into Chechnya's Neighbor Republic*, February 24, 1996.

⁸¹Interview with aid agency official, May 1996.

⁸²Médecins Sans Frontières, "Civilians Targeted, Humanitarian Law Flouted in Chechnya," Press Release, April 1996, annexes; and interviews with and internal documents obtained from the OSCE Assistance Group in Grozny, April 1996.

⁸³Internal documents obtained from OSCE Assistance Group in Grozny, April 1996. Although the OSCE report on human rights violations observes that there was no independent confirmation of pro-Dudayev fighters using civilians as "human shields," other sources suggest that this is a conscious and consistent strategy. See MSF press release, "Civilians," and Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia*.

⁸⁴Interviews with aid agency personnel in Ingushetia and Moscow, April 1996.

⁸⁵Statement by Mikhail Demurin, spokesman, Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, Moscow, April 16, 1996.

⁸⁶Recounted during an interview in Gehi Cu, April 7, 1996.

⁸⁷Reuter, "Pro Moscow Chechen Leaders Slam OSCE Mediator," June 9, 1996.

⁸⁸Reuter, "Lebed: Chechnya Should Get Independence," June 22, 1996.

⁸⁹Reuter, "UN Asks US to Airlift Food for Chechen Refugees," August 22, 1996.

Chapter 2

¹A survey conducted by UNHCR among IDPs in Ingushetia between July and October 1995 indicated that only 15 percent of the IDP population resided in collective centers, while 78 percent stayed with host families.

²For a discussion of methodological problems with data on refugees and IDPs, see "The Problems of Refugee Statistics," in Sadako Ogata, *The State of the World's Refugees 1995: In Search of Solutions* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): Annex I, 244-246.

³ICRC, Russian Federation / Northern Caucasus, *Factsheet*, July 17, 1996.

⁴Interviews in Grozny and Nazran, April 1996.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights Watch World Report 1996," Press Release, December 7, 1995, 2.

⁷United Nations, "Human Rights Watch Criticism Demeaning to the United Nations, Says Secretary-General's Spokesman," Press Release SG/SM/5841, December 7, 1995, 1.

⁸Chapter 99 of the UN Charter refers. An earlier study by the Humanitarianism and War Project recommended a "humanitarian trigger" mechanism that would ensure that a crisis of major humanitarian proportions would be automatically brought to the attention of the Security Council, despite the reluctance of the secretary-general or of particular UN member states. See Tabyiegen Agens Aboum et al., *A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan: A Report to the Aid Agencies* (Washington, D.C.: Refugee Policy Group, 1990), 43.

⁹See for example, Amy Kaslow, "Abuses in Chechnya and GOP Conservatism Put Aid Money in Doubt," *Christian Science Monitor* (January 13, 1995), 6.

¹⁰Holly Burkhalter, "In Moscow Tomorrow Clinton Must Lay Down New Law," *Christian Science Monitor* (May 8, 1995), 19.

¹¹International Monetary Fund, "IMF Approves Three-Year EFF Credit for the Russian Federation," IMF Press Release 96/13, March 26, 1996. One IMF payment was transferred to Moscow in August 1996 at the time of a Russian ultimatum to the Chechen separatists to surrender or face full-scale bombardment.

¹²*Russia Reform Monitor* no. 105 (February 23, 1996).

¹³Associated Press, "Chechen Funds Reported Stolen," January 28, 1996.

¹⁴UNDHA, *Update to the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Persons Displaced as a Result of the Emergency Situation in Chechnya, Russian Federation, January 1-December 31, 1995*, July 1995, 1.

¹⁵Telephone conversation with senior UN humanitarian official in Geneva, July 1996.

¹⁶Telephone conversation with senior UN humanitarian official in New York, July 1996.

¹⁷Telephone interview with UNHCR official in Geneva, July 1996.

¹⁸Reuter, "UN Asks US to Airlift Food for Chechen Refugees," August 22, 1996.

¹⁹Following the ceasefire agreement initiated by Alexander Lebed in August 1996, UN officials actively sought for the first time to mount aid activities in Chechnya proper. In September 1996, UNHCR began limited programs within Chechnya, mounted from Dagestan and Ingushetia. In October 1996, a UN mission to review the expiring 1996 UN consolidated appeal visited the region. Led by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the team included representatives of UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, and IOM. The group visited Chechnya as well

as the neighboring republics. From all accounts, the visit marked the first occasion since the beginning of that conflict that UN aid officials had entered Chechnya. The appeal that they hoped to issue in late November covering the 12 months of 1997 would represent the first UN appeal to include resources for UN activities within Chechnya proper.

²⁰For a discussion of the difficulties experienced in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, see S. Neil MacFarlane, Larry Minear, and Stephen D. Shenfield, *Armed Conflict in Georgia: A Case Study in Humanitarian Action and Peacekeeping*, Occasional Paper #21 (Providence, R.I.: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1996).

²¹See for example, Leslie McTyre, "Final Report: Mission to Daghestan, North Ossetia and Ingushetia," April 27-31, December 1995, unpublished report to UNICEF, early 1996, cited with permission of the author.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Hrair Balian, *Armed Conflict in Chechnya: Its Impact on Children — A Case Study for the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, November 1995, 45.

²⁴COVCAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (January 18, 1995), 14.

²⁵COVCAS *Bulletin* 5, no. 4 (February 15, 1995). Soviet passports, the documentation used in such determinations, contain a category identifying the passport holder by ethnic origin. A long-time resident of Grozny could thus be formally recognized as a Russian, a Chechen, etc. During the field visit to Ingushetia, federal aid was being channeled through a vastly overburdened Ingush Regional Migration Service. Ingush EMERCOM also was providing some aid to the displaced and was reportedly helpful as an intermediary between outside aid agencies and the Russian military.

²⁶UNHCR projects in Chechnya just over the border from Daghestan represented the exception. Funds were requested to underwrite activities managed by UNHCR staff making daily trips across the border.

²⁷United Nations, *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Persons Displaced as a Result of the Emergency Situation in Chechnya, Russian Federation, 1 January-31 December 1996*, April 1996, 1.

²⁸McTyre, "Final Reports," 9.

Chapter 3

¹For an elaboration of this and other relevant humanitarian principles, see Larry Minear and Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Action in Times of War: A Handbook for Practitioners* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

²The problem of insurgent areas being off-limits to UN officials and of consolidated appeals lacking the information necessary for comprehensive funding appeals is a recurring one. See, for example, Larry Minear et al., *Humanitarianism under Siege: A Critical Review of Operation Lifeline Sudan* (Trenton N.J.: Red Sea Press, 1990); and S. Neil MacFarlane and Larry Minear, *Humanitarian Action and Politics: The Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh*, Occasional Paper #25 (Providence, R.I.: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, 1997, forthcoming).

APPENDIX I: CHRONOLOGY
OCTOBER 1991-AUGUST 1996

1991

- October 29 Dudayev assumes presidency of Chechnya.
- November 2 Troops are sent to Chechnya but are later withdrawn.
- November 30 Ingushetia votes to remain within Russia.

1992

- October-
November Armed hostilities in Prigorodnyi Raion.

1993

- July 100 killed in clash between pro-Dudayev and pro-parliament opposition forces in Grozny.

1994

- September-
October Dudayev declares martial law; heavy fighting between Dudayevist and pro-Moscow Chechen opposition backed by Russian troops.
- December 6 Dudayev meets with RF Defense Minister who announces no military solution in Chechnya.
- December 9 Yeltsin authorizes use of force in Chechnya.

December 11 40,000 Russian troops deploy to Chechnya.

1995

January Aerial bombardment, shelling of Grozny and other areas by Russian forces, killing about 15,000 persons and displacing about 400,000.

February COE delays consideration of RF's candidacy for membership. Grozny brought under tentative control of Russian military after eight weeks.

April 6 Soros Foundation consultant Fred Cuny and three Russian team members disappear in Chechnya.

April 10 EU defers interim trade accord with Russia.

April 11 IMF approves \$6.8 billion in loans to RF.

April 26 OSCE Assistance Group in Grozny establishes presence.

June 14 Chechen fighters seize 1,000 hostages and hospital in Buddenyovsk, southern Russia. Over 100 civilians killed in Russian rescue operation.

June 16 OSCE Assistance Group praises Russia's improved human rights record in Chechnya.

June 27 EU authorizes signing of interim trade accord with RF citing improved situation in Chechnya.

July EU signs interim trade accord with RF.

July 30	OSCE brokers military accord.
October	OSCE office in Grozny rocketed. Armed demonstration by pro-Moscow Chechens accuses OSCE of being pro-Dudayev. Russia forces intervene; OSCE reduces staff. Security situation worsens.
November	EU ratifies trade accord with RF.
December 14-17	Parliamentary elections—Zavgayev reportedly wins 80 percent of vote in Chechnya. Elections dismissed by Dudayev. Gudermes seized by Chechen fighters; heavy fighting continues to December 24.

1996

January 9	Chechen fighters seize 2,000 hostages at Kizlyar, Dagestan. Confrontation moves to Pervomaiskoye, Dagestan; Pervomaiskoye destroyed by Russian forces; tensions rise in Dagestan.
February 22	IMF grants additional \$10.2 billion to Russia.
February 24-26	Russian forces attack villages in south-eastern Ingushetia on Chechen frontier, sparking confrontation with Ingush authorities.
April 1	Yeltsin decrees cease-fire but fighting continues.
April 16	RF Foreign Ministry warns against travel to Chechnya.
April 18	G-7 meets in Moscow with RF President

	Yeltsin in attendance; at a press conference in Moscow, MSF condemns targeting of civilians.
April 21	Dudayev reported killed, Yandarbayev assumes leadership of separatist forces.
April 29	Paris Club of western creditor states reschedules Russian \$40 billion debt over 25 years.
June 7	Yandarbayev travels to Moscow; cease-fire agreement signed.
June 10	OSCE brokers military agreement in Nazran between Russian-separatist forces.
July 3	Yeltsin re-elected president, appoints Alexander Lebed, national security advisor.
July 7	Heavy fighting continues.
August	Separatist forces seize downtown Grozny. Heavy fighting ensues. Lebed given new powers to resolve Chechnya crisis. Cease-fire agreement reached stipulating withdrawal of Russian forces, postponement of political questions, and joint patrolling by Russian and Chechen forces. Zavgayev administration marginalized.

APPENDIX II: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Fery Aalam	ICRC (Grozny)
Manuel Bessler	Head of Delegation, ICRC (Grozny)
Samantha Bolton	Communications Director, MSF (NY)
Jean-Marc Bornet	Delegate General for Eastern Europe, ICRC (Geneva)
Jean-Bernard Bouvier	Project Coordinator, MERLIN (Nazran)
Shawn Braithwaite	MERLIN (Grozny)
John Colarusso	Dept. of Anthropology, McMaster University (Canada)
Helena Fokina	Liaison Officer, UNICEF Moscow
Valerie Fowler	MERLIN (Grozny)
Carlotta Gall	Reporter, <i>Moscow Times</i>
Simon Giles	Relief Administrator, ICRC (Nazran, Ingushetia)
Elaine Gordon	Volunteer nurse, MEDAIR (Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia)
Rendt Gorter	Representative, MERLIN (Moscow)
Ken Gluck	Coordinator, IRC (Grozny)
Eric Goemaere	Director General, Médecins Sans Frontières

Tim Guldiman	Head of Mission, OSCE Assistance Group (Grozny)
Moira Hart-Poliquin	Senior Programme Funding Officer, UNICEF (NY)
Maarit Hirvonen	Programme Officer, Emergency Operations, UNICEF (NY)
Chris Hunter	Centre for Peacemaking and Democratic Development (Moscow)
Viktor Ilyukhin	Former Chairman of the Security Committee of the Russian Parliament
Francois Jean	MSF-France (Paris)
Andre Kamenshikov	Nonviolence International Society for NIS (Moscow)
Vladimir Korokoff	UNHCR Programme Officer (Nazran, Ingushetia)
Kazuhide Kuroda	Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UNDHA (NY)
Vaughn Lantz	FSU Division, Central & East Europe Branch, CIDA (Ottawa)
Nicholas Leader	Emergencies Manager, OXFAM UK
Jonathon Littell	AICF (Grozny)
Juan Perez Lorenzo	Russia Desk, ECHO (Brussels)
Jean Pierre Mahe	Coordinator, AICF North Caucasus (Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia)

Poul Mackintosh	Deputy Head of Mission, IOM (Sleptsovskaya, Ingushetia)
Hayashi Masaaki	Journalist (Moscow)
Leslie McTyre	Consultant on Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, UNICEF (Dagestan and Ingushetia)
Thierry Meyrat	ICRC Head of Delegation in the Russian Federation, ICRC (Moscow)
Martin Nicholson	British Embassy, Moscow
Chil Nirtebaum	Russia Desk, UNHCR (Geneva)
Christopher Panico	North Caucasus/Russia Desk, Human Rights Watch (Washington)
Michael Phelps	Head of Office, UNHCR (Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia)
John Robson	Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UNDHA Russian Federation (Moscow)
Eleanor Rose	Delegate, ICRC (Grozny)
Cedric Roussel	Administrator, Médecins du Monde, Chechnya (Nazran)
Galina Starovoitova	Former Advisor to President Yeltsin on Nationalities (Moscow)
Anatoli Shabad	Former Deputy in the Russian Parliament (Moscow)
Thomas Seghezzi	Relief Coordinator, ICRC (Nazran)

Shoko Shimoszawa	Programme Officer, UNHCR Regional Office (Moscow)
Hilda Sleurs	Head of Mission, MSF Grozny
Yusup Soslambekov	Former Speaker of the Chechen Parliament (Grozny)
Petteri Vuorimaki	Coordinator for CIS & Baltic States, IOM (Geneva)
Egbert Wesselink	Dutch Interchurch Aid (Amsterdam)
Jim White	Field Officer, IOM Sleptsovskaya (formerly Grozny)
Fatima Yandiyeva	Interpreter / Assistant, IOM, Sleptsovskaya (formerly Grozny)

APPENDIX III: FOR FURTHER READING

Balian, Hrair, *Chechnya: Armed Conflict in Chechnya — Its Impact on Children*, Case Study for the United Nations Study of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, Covcas Centre for Law and Conflict Resolution, November 1995.

Fitzpatrick, Catherine, *Briefing on Press Freedom in Russia before the Presidential Elections*, Committee to Protect Journalists, June 1996.

Goldenberg, Suzanne, *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder*, (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1994).

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia, Three Months of War in Chechnya* 7, no. 6 (February 1995).

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Russia: Partisan War in Chechnya on the Eve of the WWII Commemoration* 7, no. 8 (May 1995).

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Kovalyev, Sergei, A. Blinushov et al., *By All Available Means: The Russian Federation Ministry of Internal Affairs Operation in the Village of Samashki, April 7-8, 1995, (Results of Independent Research by the Observer Mission of Human Rights and Public Organizations in the Conflict Zone in Chechnya)* (Moscow: Memorial Human Rights Center, 1995).

Orlov, O., A. Cherkasov, and S. Sirotkin, *Conditions in Detention in Chechen Republic Conflict Zone: Treatment of Detainees* (Moscow: Memorial Human Rights Center, 1995).

Smeets, Rieks H.J. and Egbert G. Wesselink, *Chechnya: One Year of War — A Pax Christi International Report* (December 11, 1995).

ABOUT THE HUMANITARIANISM AND WAR PROJECT
AND THE AUTHORS

Day in and day out, from Burundi to Chechnya, Liberia to Afghanistan, civil strife inflicts widespread human suffering. Even where bloodshed has abated, for example in the former Yugoslavia and Mozambique, tensions and the awesome task of rebuilding war-torn countries remain.

How can the international community better protect those caught in national and regional conflicts? How can it more effectively assist nations to turn the corner on violence and become productive societies? Can aid become an effective force for the resolution of conflicts? Must humanitarian action, as in the past, await the request of warring parties and elicit their consent? With the ebbing of East-West tensions, can humane values form the new cornerstone of international relations?

These are questions being addressed by the Humanitarianism and War Project, an initiative by an independent team of researchers based at Brown University and drawing on the expertise of scholars and practitioners from around the world to assist the international community chart its course in the post-Cold War era. The co-directors of the Project are Thomas G. Weiss, Associate Director of the Watson Institute and Executive Director of the Academic Council on the United Nations System; and Larry Minear, Senior Fellow at the Watson Institute and the Project's principal researcher.

During the first phase (1991-1993), the Project was co-sponsored by the Refugee Policy Group (Washington, DC), with support provided by two dozen practitioner organizations and interested foundations. These included four governments (Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and France); six intergovernmental organizations (UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNDP, DHA/UNDRO, and the UN Special Program for the Horn of Africa); ten nongovernmental organizations (Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development [Canada], International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee, Norwegian

Refugee Council, Oxfam-UK, and Save the Children Fund-UK); and three foundations (Pew Charitable Trusts, Rockefeller Foundation, and Arias Foundation).

The second phase (1994-1996), the Project has been based at the Watson Institute and has financial support to date from: four governments (Australia, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the United States); nine intergovernmental organizations (UNICEF, UNDP, UN Volunteers, UN University, International Organization for Migration, OECD Development Centre, European Commission Humanitarian Office, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and the World Food Programme); seventeen nongovernmental organizations (American Red Cross, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee, Nordic Red Cross Societies [Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian & Swedish], Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children-US, World Vision, and Trócaire); and three foundations (Pew Charitable Trusts, McKnight Foundation, and U.S. Institute of Peace).

The Project has conducted field research in the Horn of Africa, the Persian Gulf, Central America, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Rwanda, Georgia, and Haiti in order to publish a series of case studies and policy recommendations. In addition to journal articles and op-eds, the project has also published five books: *The News Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action* (1996), *Mercy Under Fire: War and the Global Humanitarian Community* (1995); *Humanitarian Politics* (1995); *Humanitarian Action in Times of War: A Handbook for Practitioners* (1993, also available in Spanish and French); and a volume of collected essays by practitioners, *Humanitarianism Across Borders: Sustaining Civilians in Times of War* (1993). The project has also prepared a training module which is currently in use by UN organizations.

Greg Hansen has worked as a UN Volunteer in the Republic of Georgia and as a civilian observer in the former Yugoslavia. He has conducted peace research in Lebanon and Mozambique and in 1982 served with a Canadian contingent of UN peacekeeping forces in Cyprus.

Robert Seely, a British national, is a staff correspondent in the London Bureau of the Associated Press. He served in the former Soviet Union from 1990-1994 as Kiev correspondent for *The Times* (London) and special correspondent for the Washington Post. He has traveled frequently to the Caucasus, including four visits to Chechnya, covering the post-Soviet conflicts in the region. In 1994-1995, he was affiliated with the Ukrainian Research Center at Harvard University and the Watson Institute of Brown University. He is currently writing a book on Russian-Chechen relations.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Brown University's Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies was established in 1986 to promote the work of students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing global problems and developing initiatives that address them. The Watson Institute promotes research, teaching, and public education on international affairs, an area of inquiry that encompasses inter-state relations; transnational, regional and global phenomena; and cross-national, comparative studies.

The Watson Institute supports and coordinates the activities of scholars and practitioners with interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary global problems. Most are social scientists working on political, economic, social or cultural issues, along with scholars from the humanities and the natural sciences whose perspectives contribute directly to the understanding of these issues. The Watson Institute's affiliated centers and programs currently engage in a broad range of activities, from improving the teaching of international studies to contributing to research and public education about international security, the comparative study of development, health, hunger, the United Nations, U.S. foreign policy, and issues arising in regions throughout the world.

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