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EMINENT JURISTS PANEL

on

Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights

29 January 2007

Leading Jurists begin terrorism inquiry in Moscow

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The Eminent Jurists Panel on Terrorism, Counter-terrorism and Human Rights begins a public hearing in Moscow today. Three members of the Panel, Ms. Mary Robinson, Ms Hina Jilani and Professor Stefan Trechsel, are in Moscow to examine how Russian law, policy and practice have developed in response to the threat of terrorism.

The Russia hearing is part of a global inquiry by the Eminent Jurists Panel, exploring the impact of terrorism and the fight against terrorism on human rights and the rule of law. The hearing is the tenth in a series of hearings held around the world by the Panel, a high-level and independent group appointed by ICJ in October 2005. The Panel will issue a global report on terrorism, counter-terrorism and human rights in autumn 2007.

“Russia has long experience of internal conflict in the North Caucuses, and of highly destructive acts of terrorism”, said Professor Stefan Trechsel, former President of the European Commission on Human Rights and currently judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. “The State has a duty to protect against terrorist acts, but in the Russian Federation, as in other countries we have visited, counter-terrorism laws and practices have raised serious questions of human rights protection.”

In two days of public hearings at the House of Journalists, the Panel will hear testimony from a wide range of actors, including state officials, members of the Duma, leading lawyers, national and international human rights organisations, and members of the public affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism. The Russia hearing is organized by the International Commission of Jurists and the ad hoc Steering Committee of Russian NGOs including the Independent Council for Legal Expertise, Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, “Memorial” Human Rights Center, Center “Demos”, Nizhny Novgorod Committee against Torture, and Moscow Helsinki Group. Following the hearing, on Wednesday 31 January and Thursday 1 February, the panel members intend to hold private meetings with senior government representatives.

“There are fundamental standards of human rights in international law which must be upheld in all circumstances”, said Ms. Mary Robinson. “We are here to listen to a range of experts and witnesses so that we can make a fully considered assessment of the Russian response to terrorism, and understand both the demands of security and the need to protect human rights in the Russian Federation.”

Later, on February 2 at 12.00, also at the House of Journalists, the Panel will hold a press conference to share its conclusions with the media. Individual members of the panel will be available for interviews upon request.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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Background

The Panel is composed of eight judges, lawyers and academics from all regions of the world. The Panel exercises its mandate independently, with the logistical support of the ICJ Secretariat and its network of organizations. Arthur Chaskalson, former Chief Justice and first President of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, chairs the Panel.

The panel members present in Moscow are Hina Jilani (Pakistan), a lawyer before the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders; Mary Robinson, now Head of the Ethical Globalization Initiative, and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former President of Ireland; Stefan Trechsel (Switzerland), former President of the European Commission on Human Rights, and judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The other members are Georges Abi-Saab (Egypt), former Judge at the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda; Robert K. Goldman (United States), Professor of Law at American University's Washington College of Law, a former President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and former UN expert on counter-terrorism and human rights; Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand), Professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and UN expert on human rights in North Korea; and Justice E. Raúl Zaffaroni (Argentina), a judge at the Supreme Court of Argentina.

The Panel has held hearings in Australia, Colombia, East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), the United Kingdom (in London on current counter-terrorism policies and in Belfast on lessons from the past), North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), the United States, the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay), and South-East Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand). Other countries or regions where the Panel will also hold hearings include South Asia, Canada, the Middle East and the European Union.

For further information on the public hearing, please contact (in Moscow) Evgeniya Zusman at +7 495 203-9196 or Gerald Staberock at +41 793775446, and (in Geneva) Róisín Pillay on + 41 22 979 3830 or + 41 76 2082327. See also the information on the Eminent Jurists Panel at <http://ejp.icj.org>.