

To the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation  
V.S. Chernomyrdin

Esteemed Viktor Stepanovich!

I listened with great interest and attention yesterday to your speech on TV on the conflict in Chechnya. Not all of the provisions of this speech seem indisputable to me. But I am pleased that on a range of key points, related to the beginning of a peaceful settlement, our positions are aligned with yours, or are close. It seems to me extremely important to proceed, without losing initiative, with refining the proposals for the cessation of large-scale hostilities as quickly as possible. Let me share some of my thoughts with you.

1. In my opinion, the essential condition for the effectiveness of the negotiating process at its first stage is the de facto recognition of the administration of General Dudaev as one of the parties to the negotiations. This follows at least from the fact that it is this administration that is still recognized by a large part of the Chechens as an organizing structure in the resistance to the federal troops. I believe that the very fact of the consultations that began with the mission of Mr. Abubakarov at the government level significantly increases the chances of a peaceful settlement.
2. It seems to me that in the process of negotiations all of the points of the peace plan must not be linked into a single package. A stage-by-stage termination of military conflict, without setting preconditions for any given stage, would be far more effective. Even minimal success in the negotiations would have enormous public and international resonance and in doing so would stimulate the continuation of the process.
3. In this war, the humanitarian aspects are of great importance: the burial of the dead, the evacuation of seriously wounded, the exchange of prisoners, assistance to the civilian population, etc. It would be fundamentally important at each stage of the settlement to agree on the resolution of humanitarian issues.
4. The quickest unveiling of a specific government plan for the cessation of hostilities would be extremely important. Openness and transparency of the federal government's position in the negotiations would help make the peace process irreversible

I really want to hope that your initiative, when it is implemented, will not be distorted by anyone, as happened a week ago with the proposal for a 48-hour truce.

Tomorrow, January 18<sup>th</sup>, I will fly to Moscow for a few days and if you would find it useful to meet with me for a conversation about some aspects of a peace settlement in Chechnya, I would be glad to exchange thoughts with you on this subject.

For a preliminary general overview of my point of view on the situation in the Chechen Republic, I am sending you a brief memorandum that I composed (attached). I do not consider it an official document, but a way to share my view of the problem with you.

Best regards,

Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation

S.L. Kovalev

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