

COUNTRY

**Chechen Republic,
Russia**

ISSUE

- **Enforced
disappearance**

CRIMES

- **Enforced
disappearance**
- **Abduction**
- **Arbitrary detention**

”

**The worst thing is not
knowing what
happened to him.**

5,925 people are verified as victims of enforced disappearances in the Natalia Estemirova Documentation Centre (NEDC) database of the Chechen conflicts. Over 70% were civilians. Nearly half disappeared during military operations, including so-called zachistki, with the rest through abductions or under unknown circumstances. 25 years later, most remain missing.

YEAR

1994-2025

5 925

VICTIMS



Chechen Republic, Russia

1999 - 2000
Second
Chechen war;
main military
phase

1994 - 1996
First Chechen
War

2000 - 2004
Enforced
disappearances
peak; systematic
pattern

2004 - 2007
Decrease in
cases

2008 - now
Phenomenon
persists,
systematic
impunity remains

NEDC has documented 5,925 cases of enforced disappearances, mostly civilians. About half were abducted during military operations, including the notorious mopping-up operations (zachistki), while others vanished in abductions or under unknown circumstances. The actual number is likely higher, as many cases were never reported or could not be verified.

Victims included children, women, the elderly, but mostly men of fighting age. The perpetrators mainly appeared to be from Russian federal forces and allied Chechen (local) security units. Most families never learned the fate of their relatives. Some victims were later discovered in mass graves with signs of torture. Those who insisted on searching for their missing loved ones faced threats and intimidation.

The widespread and systematic nature of these enforced disappearances indicates that they may amount to a 'crime against humanity', an international crime. Since nearly all Chechen families were affected, the disappeared have left a void in society. Many are still seeking their loved ones – and justice.

Call to action:



Enforced disappearances in Chechnya must be investigated as international crimes, as defined in the ICC Statute and in the criminal codes of democratic states. Democratic states should sanction responsible military and police officials.



Norwegian
Helsinki Committee

Learn more

