

> Passports were confiscated, private homes looted, and there were marauding, arrests and killings.
>
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Photo: HRC Memorial

2000:

A Sweeping Operation in Tsotsi-Yurt

Sweeping operations (zachistkas) were a serious wartime scourge for the civilian population. There were several dozen such operations in the village of Tsotsi-Yurt, taking place from 2000 to 2003. Russian forces typically surrounded the settlement, conducted house-to-house searches and detained residents. Civilians became victims of looting, arbitrary arrests, torture, disappearances and killings.



ISSUE

- Sweeping operations

VICTIMS

- 223 People

CRIMES

- Unlawful detention
- Enforced disappearances
- Beatings and torture
- Kidnappings
- Killings

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Norwegian Helsinki Committee

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27 April 2000: Russian troops seal off the village

2 May 2000: Village head appeals to a general to free captives

21 November 2000: Last resident released

Tsotsi-Yurt is a village 25 kilometres southeast of Grozny, with approximately 16 000 people in the early 2000s. After surrounding the village, armoured vehicles and Russian troops appeared on the village streets. Russian security forces (FSB) and Ministry of Defence troops were conducting a sweeping operation.

Soldiers broke into houses and beat residents indiscriminately, including women, children and men. They shot at livestock and cars and looted village houses, loading televisions, audio and video equipment, furniture and bedding onto military trucks. Under the pretext of a check, they confiscated passports, tore them and told the men they had no valid IDs. Many men were detained and taken to the village's outskirts, including a former village head, Ali Abuyev, a father of six.

The detainees were held at a poultry farm, where a temporary filtration point had been set up. Abuyev spent the next night there before disappearing without a trace. On 2 May 2000, two men were found in a forest; one was alive but severely tortured. He later died. Villagers had to pay 5,000-10,000 roubles to secure the release of other residents.

There has been no effective investigation into the crimes, and no perpetrator has been identified or brought to justice. However, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed systematic disappearances in Tsotsi-Yurt and nearby areas, with authorities failing to investigate them effectively.