

A brief description of events in the village of Samashki, based on information available to the observation mission of human rights non-governmental organizations working in active combat zone in Chechnya

In an ultimatum announced on April 6th, Deputy Commander of the Russian Military Command in Chechnya Lieutenant General Antonov demanded that the residents of the village of Samashki turn in two hundred and sixty-four assault rifles by seven a.m. In addition, Antonov demanded the unimpeded access of units of the Interior Troops into the village. The ultimatum stated that in the event of a failure to comply with its requirements, Russian troops would launch an attack on the village. According to Antonov, the evidence that there exists such a number of assault rifles in Samashki was supplied by military intelligence. Members of the Chechen delegation, led by the head of the village administration, were able to convince General Antonov to postpone the deadline of the ultimatum by two hours. According to the Chechen side, the village could not turn in 264 assault rifles by the morning because it did not have that number of weapons.

The shelling of the village began long before the expiration of the ultimatum's deadline. In the night of April 6th to 7th from 22:30 to 1:30, Russian forces carried out an attack on the village of Samashki using artillery and rifles. From five in the morning on the 7th of April over the course of 40 minutes, the area of the village of Samashki was subject to a bombing campaign, which damaged the outskirts of the village. Then, during the first half of the day, mortar and artillery attacks were conducted. Fragments of shells (probably from tanks), mines, and unguided missiles (likely from aircraft) are scattered around the village. An unexploded aerial bomb that punctured the roof was found in one of the houses on the southern outskirts of the village. There are sizeable shell holes in the walls of a number of houses.

On the same day, April 7th, at around 14:00, additional negotiations took place between the military and the representatives from the village. The final deadline for the implementation of the ultimatum was set for 16:00. The shelling stopped. Residents started to leave the village, but 20 minutes before the expiration of the ultimatum's deadline shelling resumed unexpectedly. As

a result, dead and wounded appeared among the residents, and an attempt to leave the village was essentially suppressed.

At around 17:30, the Interior Troops entered the village.

There is contradictory information on whether or not there was fighting in the village itself. According to the majority of the refugees, no fighting took place in the village against the military personnel that entered there, since before this, at the insistence of the elders of the village, the militants had left, and there remained only a few dozen militia members who were residents of the village. At the same time, there is evidence that for about half an hour the federal forces encountered resistance from a small group of militia members. Information on casualties among the federal forces is extremely contradictory (from 0 to 19 dead, both that and the other information with reference to official sources.)

By 18:00 the village was fully occupied.

The so-called “mopping-up” operation of the northern outskirts of the village began on the evening of the same day, and of the rest of the territory of the village--on the morning of April 8th. According to the residents of Samashki, on the morning of the 8th of April soldiers in masks began to comb through the village. BTRs [armored personnel carriers] moved through the streets; on some streets they methodically carried out shelling of all the houses. Many homes were set on fire, flamethrowers were used. The houses on Stepnaya, Sharipov's, Vygodnaya, Rabochaya, Proletarskaya, and Kooperativnaya streets suffered the greatest destruction. Many houses were looted.

The military threw grenades into cellars, disregarding the reality that there could be civilians hiding there.

Until the middle of the day of April 10th the village was completely blockaded, and even the evacuation of the wounded was impossible. Repeatedly on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of April

(before 15:00), vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the international organization ‘Doctors without Borders’ attempted to go into the village to evacuate the wounded. However, the post of the Russian Ministry of Interior located between Sernovodsk and Samashki did not let them through. At the same time, contrary to international norms, written authorization, signed by the commander of the Russian Military Command in Chechnya Colonel General A.S. Kulikov, was demanded from doctors for visiting the village. When at 13:10 on April 10th representatives of the Red Cross delivered such authorization, they were still not allowed into Samashki, being told that a contrary order was received from Mozdok.

All the men detained in the village were taken to the location of the military unit north of Samashki. There they were all beaten, some were attacked with dogs. A portion of the detainees were sent to a temporary detention camp near Assinovskaya (at the command post for the Russian forces.) Those detained at the post between Samashki and Sernovodsky were also taken there (women, the elderly, and children were not prevented from leaving Samashki). Another portion of the detainees were taken by helicopter to Mozdok. On the way, the detainees were beaten again. In Mozdok, at the filtration point, everyone passed through “the gauntlet,” and were beaten with batons and rifle butts. The cells were overfilled. There was insufficient food, and a lack of water. They were also beaten during interrogations, and it was demanded of the interrogees to either confess to being a fighter or to give the names of fighters.

In the camp near Assinovskaya beatings and torture were widely used (including torture with electric wires), according to numerous testimonies.

On April 7th, media outlets, citing the Command of the Russian Federal Troops in Chechnya, reported that Dudaev’s fighters in the village of Samashki had shot the village elders who had called for the militants to leave the village and to allow the Russian troops into Samashki. When interviewing numerous refugees from Samashki, including the village elders, we found that on April 7, when the elders were returning to the village after negotiations with the representatives of the Russian Command, the vehicles that they were traveling in were fired

upon. There were bullet holes in the vehicles, but none of the passengers was harmed. The gunfire came from the direction of the Russian troops' positions.

The people who escaped from Samashki testified that among the soldiers were young military conscripts (18-20 years old), but among those who carried out the "mop-up" operations, the majority were older military personnel (25-30 years old), who were most likely contract soldiers. The armored vehicles displayed an emblem of a red bear standing on its hind legs. It is known that members of the Moscow OMON [Special Purpose Police Unit] and the Orenburg SOBR (Special Rapid Deployment Force) took part in the operation.

[Translated by Sarah Dunn for the National Security Archive

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