

WRITTEN QUESTION P-1063/04  
by Marie-Françoise Duthu (Verts/ALE)  
to the Commission

Subject: Russo-Chechen conflict - mediation by the European Union between the governments of Vladimir Putin and Aslan Maskhadov

Since 1994, Chechnya has been ravaged by two wars of exceptional violence. According to the most recent estimates, one fifth of the civilian population has been killed, a capital city of 400 000 inhabitants has been razed to the ground, the infrastructure has been completely destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of refugees are living in inhumane conditions in 'temporary' camps.

All the humanitarian and human rights NGOs working on the ground have made the same observations: a marked deterioration in the situation of civilians and an increased number of disappearances and deadly 'cleansings' of villages by Russian troops.

On 23 March 2003, in the midst of the war and while Russian tanks were still in the streets of Grozny, Moscow enforced the holding of a 'referendum' on a 'new constitution'. The results of the referendum, for which the turnout was 80% and in which 96% of the electorate voted for the constitution, were reminiscent of the Soviet era and disputed by all independent observers.

On 5 October 2003, Moscow's stooge, Akhmad Kadyrov, became the 'official' President of the Republic of Chechnya in a sham election, the thinly disguised aim of which was the political isolation of Aslan Maskhadov's government. The election of that government, the most recent legally elected government in Chechnya, was recognised in 1997 by the OSCE, and it remains the only legitimate government to date.

Since the beginning of the second war in October 1999, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have adopted numerous resolutions calling for a political solution to the conflict in Chechnya, but they have not, however, produced the desired effect.

I believe that Europe could do more than it is doing at present to promote a negotiated political solution to the current conflict.

It is clear that a serious attempt to find a political solution to the war in Chechnya will, sooner or later, ultimately bring to the negotiating table the two parties to the conflict, the representatives of Vladimir Putin and those of Aslan Maskhadov.

What specific action does the Commission plan to take in the next few weeks and months with a view to promoting a negotiated political solution of that nature? In particular, does the Commission intend to contribute to the establishment of a dialogue between the two sides in the conflict, the government of Vladimir Putin and that of Aslan Maskhadov? What incentives does it think that it will be able to propose in order to encourage them to take part in this dialogue?