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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

May 9, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable John F. Kelly  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Tillerson and Kelly:

I write today out of grave concern for the safety of gay men in the Chechnya Republic of the Russian Federation, who have reportedly been the target of a violent campaign by Chechen security forces to terrorize, detain, and abuse individuals on account of their perceived sexual orientation. I urge your Departments to pursue possible avenues for urgently admitting these persecuted LGBT individuals to the United States, preferably via humanitarian parole or expedited refugee processing.

Since late February, the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* and NGOs have reported the existence of a network of secret “prison camps” in Chechnya, where gay men have been rounded up and tortured to reveal the names of other gay men, who are then also detained. At least three individuals have died at the hands of security forces, and others were reportedly the victims of so-called “honor” killings after they were released by Chechen officials, who threatened their families to take action against them.

There is no safe space in Russia for these individuals in the event they are released, manage to escape, or seek to avoid initial capture. Chechen authorities have claimed that “there are no gays in Chechnya” and have said that their families should send any such individuals “to a place where they will never return”. Fleeing to Europe is also risky, as Chechen criminal organizations have been known to carry out violence in European countries and the threat of honor killings exists in diaspora communities. Without urgent assistance, these gay men have no safe, durable solution to live as who they are. I urge you to consider humanitarian parole or expedited refugee processing for these individuals. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin  
Ranking Member