

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Sydney/Berne, 4 September 2004

Dear Antonina and colleagues in Russia,

With horror and disbelief we have followed the terrible and inhuman hostage taking of young children, youth, parents, relatives and even innocent babies at the school of Beslan. We are shocked and share the suffering with the inhabitants of the North Ossetian town.

As social workers we know what short and long term negative influences such traumatic experiences can have on people – particularly on children. And we know that many Russian social workers and social educators will have an important and difficult role now in helping the victims of the siege to deal with the frightful experiences.

When travails like this occur, it is easy to be seized with frenzy, to think of revenge and to support political hard liners. However, as we have seen also in other parts of the world, hard military responses do not diminish or prevent new terror attacks. On the contrary, they seem to stimulate and support them.

Therefore it is important to work for democratic and lasting political solutions and to look closer into the reasons why some human beings are prepared to carry out such heinous crimes. Crimes they carry out against their own fellow citizens and neighbours – their own brothers and sisters – in order to get the global attention for their frustrations and problems.

We grieve with Beslan, North Ossetia and Russia. And our thoughts and sympathy are with you; the killed and wounded babies, children, youth and grown-ups of Beslan and their loved ones.

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