

Kadyrov Will Punish Gift-Bearers On Birthday

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has banned public celebrations for his 35th birthday next week and pledged to fire anybody who even attempts to give him a gift.

Kadyrov's birthday next Wednesday coincides with City Day in Grozny, where celebrations will include fireworks, a laser show, the opening of a new building complex and performances by hip-yrating pop diva Shakira and British violinist Vanessa-Mae.

"There won't be any birthday celebrations. I am categorically banning anybody from dedicating any events [to my birthday], no matter where the events take place," Kadyrov said in a statement.

"Anybody who approaches the Chechen leader and even tries to give him a gift will be fired."

It was unclear whether Kadyrov has the authority to fire anybody he pleases.

Kadyrov, who will be celebrating in the company of close friends and family, also said special magazine editions devoted to his birthday would not be permitted.

"We must do everything to ensure that every resident of the republic and hundreds of guests from many Russian regions and foreign states will enjoy the [City Day] holiday," he said.

Shakira and Vanessa-Mae will play at the opening of Grozny-City, a seven-building complex that includes a 45-story building, five-star hotel, business center with a helipad on the roof and subterranean parking for 3,000 cars.

The choice of Shakira, who wears revealing clothing and dances suggestively in more than one of her videos, is curious for a region where Chechen women who do not wear Islamic headscarves have increasingly faced state-sanctioned harassment and discrimination.

The two-time Grammy winner is also a UNICEF goodwill ambassador and an outspoken advocate for universal childhood education. She is scheduled to receive the person of the year award at the Latin Grammys in November for her "renowned artistic and philanthropic contributions."

It was unclear Wednesday whether Shakira is aware of alleged widespread human rights abuses in Chechnya — including accusations of disappearances and torture at the hands of pro-Kadyrov forces — or whether she plans to raise them with Chechen authorities.

The Grozny show is not among the tour dates listed on Shakira's official web site or her Facebook page, which both list the next tour date as Oct. 14 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

It is rumored that Vanessa-Mae will receive \$500,000 for the show, and that Kevin Costner, Hillary Swank and Eva Mendes will also make appearances at the festivities, RBC reported.

Kadyrov's taste for international stars and luxury goods is legendary. U.S. diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks feature the former rebel dancing "clumsily with his gold-plated automatic stuck down in the back of his jeans" and showering children with \$100 bills at a lavish wedding held for oilman Gadzhi Makhachev's son.

In another memo, U.S. diplomats said Kadyrov pockets a third of federal aid to Chechnya.

The Kremlin relies on Kadyrov to maintain stability in the region after two separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s.

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