

Kadyrov Wants Protesters Behind Bars

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Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov flexed his strongman muscles Tuesday, saying he would throw all the protesters who recently took to the streets in Moscow into jail as they represent the "enemies of Russia."

"If I had my way, I would jail people who organized those meetings," Kadyrov said, according to Gazeta.ru.

Kadyrov's saber-rattling remarks came as he stood alongside Prime Minister Vladimir Putin at the forum of the People of Southern Russia, in the city of Kislovodsk in the Stavropol region.

Kadyrov, a former warlord who swore his loyalty to Putin, says he believes that the prime minister will win another term as president in the first round of the election scheduled for March 4.

"We have no other candidates and all those other people are losers. Russia's fate should be

decided by the strong leader," he said.

Kadyrov's scorn was directed firmly at other presidential candidates like nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov and the left-leaning Just Russia leader Sergei Mironov.

The Chechen president, known to rule his republic with an iron fist and with no tolerance for opposition, called those behind the December protests on Moscow's Bolotnaya Ploshchad and Prospekt Akademika Sakharova as the "enemies of Russia."

"Who are they? They are 30,000 people speaking for the population of more than 100 million people," Kadyrov said.

The protests erupted following wide-ranging allegations of mass electoral fraud in the December State Duma vote, which delivered a narrow win for Putin's United Russia party.

In the Chechen republic, the party received a near-unanimous 99.47 percent of votes with a typically high voter turnout.

Speaking to reporters after the forum, Kadyrov called opposition figure Alexei Navalny, a popular blogger and an organizer of the protest march in Moscow, a "chatterbox who doesn't know what he is talking about."

At the same time, Kadyrov described Navalny as a "smart, prepared employee of some kind of service," suggesting possible ties to foreign organizations.

Navalny, a self-described national-democrat, is known for using harsh language when talking about Chechnya and other North Caucasus states, accusing them of subsisting largely off government largesse.

In particular, Navalny popularized the slogan "Stop feeding the Caucasus," which has become a clarion call among nationalists.

Oddly, Kadyrov had earlier tried to establish ties with prominent members of hard-line nationalist organizations like Dmitry Demushkin and Alexander Potkin, inviting them on a trip to Chechnya last summer. After the trip, Demushkin had high praise for Kadyrov.

"Kadyrov is a great Chechen nationalist," Demushkin told Russky Reporter magazine after the visit.

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