

Kadyrov Laughs Off Allegations That He Made Hit List

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Chechnya leader Ramzan Kadyrov, seen here attending Police Day celebrations, scoffed at allegations that he had prepared hit lists of prominent opponents.

Correction appended

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has once again denied being involved in killings of his critics, complaining that he is the victim of a campaign to tarnish his name.

In an interview with the BBC [published](#) Tuesday, Kadyrov laughed off long-standing allegations that he had prepared a hit list of his political opponents, saying that such a claim could only be made by a schizophrenic.

"I swear to Allah, the idea would never come to my mind," he said.

British intelligence service MI5 warned last year that a refugee from Chechnya was a henchman of Kadyrov and might assassinate exiled Chechen politician Akhmed Zakayev,

according to British media reports that cited a London court decision.

Human rights groups have long accused the Chechen strongman of ruthlessly persecuting his enemies. Investigators in Austria and the United Arab Emirates have linked him to the murders of Umar Israilov, a Chechen refugee who was gunned down in Vienna in 2010, and Sulim Yamadayev, a former commander who was shot in Dubai in 2009.

Kadyrov protested that he is used as a scapegoat by the West.

"The life we are building today is wonderful," he said in the interview. "But the West and Europe don't want that. They say that Kadyrov is a bandit. If there's an incident in Europe, they say Kadyrov's behind it. If someone's cow dies, Kadyrov's to blame. If a chicken's not laying eggs, it's Kadyrov's fault," he was quoted as saying.

The BBC [video](#) also shows a Chechen woman who said that she had received threats for not wearing a headscarf in public and that Muslim clerics make children spy on their parents' observance of prayer rules.

Kadyrov denied accusations that women's rights are being violated in Chechnya. "I love my mother, my wife, my sisters very much. I honor and respect them. Women are the keepers of the family. All these allegations have been made up," he said.

Meanwhile, a news report published Tuesday said that a man accused of killing a Chechen poet has said he committed the crime because the victim had criticized Kadyrov.

Zelimkhan Karimov, who was detained earlier this month in connection with the murder of Umar Akhtakhanov, said in a written confession that he plotted the crime because Akhtakhanov had insulted the Chechen leadership in his writings and statements, Kommersant reported.

But the confession was dubious, because Akhtakhanov, who was shot outside his Moscow apartment in November, was a pro-Russian writer not known for criticism of Kadyrov. National media have speculated that he was shot by mistake by contract killers who mixed him up with a businessman living in an apartment next door. The neighbor, Shamil-Khan Beshayev, was shot in April.

Correction: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated that a Chechen woman shown in a BBC video said she is forced to wear a headscarf in public. In fact, she said she had received threats for not wearing a headscarf in public.

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