

Depardieu 'Inspired' by Kadyrov's Leadership (Video)

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French actor Gerard Depardieu said he was inspired by the leadership of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and accepted a five-room apartment from him during a visit to Grozny.

Kadyrov warmly greeted Depardieu on his arrival in Grozny on a flight from Saransk, where he got his Russian passport stamped on Saturday with his new permanent address in Russia.

But Kadyrov also appeared to make an effort to convince the actor to consider settling down in Chechnya instead of the capital of the Mordovia republic.

“I just handed Gerard Depardieu the documents to a five-room apartment and a certificate making him an honorary citizen of Chechnya,” Kadyrov wrote next to a [photo](#) of him hugging the actor on Instagram on Monday.

Kadyrov, who is accused of widespread human rights abuses during his rule of the restive North Caucasus republic, met Depardieu at the Grozny airport on Sunday and posted photographs on his Instagram account of the two men sharing a meal with eight of Kadyrov's children. The two men also danced the traditional Caucasian Lezginka.

Depardieu, saying he was inspired by Kadyrov's political leadership, promised to make a film about the rebuilding of Grozny following its destruction in two bloody separatist wars.

"I want to explain how one man could build a city all over again in five years. I am sure that really happy people live here. To dance and sing like Chechens you have to be genuinely happy," Depardieu said in comments carried by Interfax.

The project will be an American-English-French-Russian collaboration called "Heart of My Father," Kadyrov said on Instagram. It will be filmed in Grozny and feature local actors.

Depardieu has been involved in a public spat with the French government over proposals to raise taxes on the wealthy, and his presence in Russia comes ahead of an official visit by French Prime Minister Francois Hollande to Moscow on Wednesday. Putin personally handed Depardieu a Russian passport on Jan. 6.

This is not Depardieu's first trip to Chechnya. In October, he came to Grozny for Kadyrov's 36th birthday, and Kadyrov has said publicly that Depardieu would be welcome to live in the region.

Before flying into Chechnya, the star of films such as "Green Card" and "Cyrano de Bergerac" visited the Bolshoi Theater with Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky on Friday and collected his registration papers in Saransk, a city 600 kilometers east of Moscow, on Saturday.

While critics claim that Depardieu is being manipulated by the Kremlin, the actor has insisted he will spend significant amounts of time in his new homeland.

A film about Grozny is not the only cultural project to which Depardieu is committed. The actor said last week that he wanted to make a series of television programs based on Russian literature, and featuring actors from around the world.

Depardieu himself recently starred in a \$7.9 million film about the Russian monk Rasputin, who was said to have wielded hypnotic power over Tsar Nicholas II and the imperial family. The joint French-Russian film premiered last year and is due to become available to Russian audiences in the fall.

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