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Kadyrov Wishes Novaya Gazeta Happy Birthday

By The Moscow Times

April 01, 2013

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has wished the opposition-minded Novaya Gazeta newspaper a happy 20th birthday.

"Today marks 20 years of Novaya Gazeta, which to this day is one of the few islands of true journalism left," Kadyrov wrote on his Instagram page on Monday night.

The warm wishes come as a surprise to anyone who recalls Kadyrov's 2010 libel suit against the newspaper for an article accusing the Chechen leader of human rights violations, including kidnappings and extrajudicial killings, allegations that Kadyrov denies.

Kadyrov also sued a Novaya Gazeta reporter for 100,000 rubles ($3,200) for accusations included in an article on criminal groups in Chechnya.

He later withdrew the lawsuits, however, citing advice from his mother and senior Chechen

religious leaders who told him not to "waste time on litigation" and focus on social problems in Chechnya instead.

Kadyrov acknowledged this history of disagreements with the newspaper in Tuesday's Instagram greeting.

"Although I often disagree with the opinion of certain journalists," he wrote, "I still appreciate your desire to find the truth and give your readers the opportunity to learn it. I hope that I can help you in this difficult task. I am always ready to answer your questions and give your readers an objective view of Chechnya."

Most recently, on March 25, Novaya Gazeta published an article in which FSB officers were cited criticizing the release of Chechen policemen accused of kidnapping and torturing a man in Moscow in 2011. The policemen were alleged by the publication to have been Kadyrov's personal bodyguards.

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