

LDPR Officials in Chechnya Were 'Coerced Into Announcing Split'

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The Liberal Democratic Party has denied reports that the Chechen branch of the party has broken away from the national organization over inflammatory comments made by the party's leader, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy.

Chechen LDPR coordinator Adlan Shamsadov said on Sunday that the branch was ceasing its activities after Zhirinovskiy proposed controlling birthrates in the republic as a measure to fight terrorism. However, the LDPR party later said that they had not received any notification about the withdrawal and that only the party's supreme council could decide whether to shut a regional branch.

The party also said that Shamsadov had been coerced into announcing a rift. Shamsadov's announcement, "which has caused such a stir, was made under pressure and threats of physical violence, according to our information," the party said in a statement.

There are serious grounds for carrying out an investigation into "those who are forcing our party members to give up their ideology," LDPR supreme council member Alexei Didenko said Monday. Didenko added that the party had been unable to locate Shamsadov and that a telephone conversation between the pair had been disturbed by a "strange noise" in the background, RIA Novosti reported.

Shamsadov had compared Zhirinovsky to a Ku Klux Klan member after the party leader said during a television show that the Caucasus should be blocked off "with barbed wire." Zhirinovsky also said that Chechens should be fined for having a third child as a way of controlling the population.

Zhirinovsky denied any wrongdoing and said that he was only answering a question posed to him during the show on Oct. 24.

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