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LDPR Casts Doubt on Chechen Branch Head's Resignation

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The Liberal Democratic Party said Tuesday that it is willing accept the resignation of Chechen branch leader Adlan Shamsadov, who decided to step down over comments made by party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky about the North Caucasus.

However, the party doesn't think Shamsadov chose to quit voluntarily.

"I have no doubt that the statement was made under pressure, under the threat of physical harm, written hurriedly, and even not by Shamsadov himself," LDPR supreme council member Alexei Didenko said, adding that the message violated procedural norms and was "full of spelling mistakes."

Other party members seemed happy to be rid of Shamsadov. "Thank you for being with us, and thank you for leaving," Deputy State Duma speaker from the LDPR Igor Lebedev said Tuesday, Interfax reported.

Zhirinovsky, know for his inflammatory statements, has been heavily criticized for saying on television last week that Russia should "block off the Caucasus with barbed wire" and that limits should be imposed on the region's birth rate as a way of fighting terrorism.

The political backlash against these statements is still mounting. Gadzhimet Safaraliyev, chairman of the Duma nationalities committee, sent a request to Prosecutor General Yury Chaika on Tuesday asking him to determine whether Zhirinovsky's comments violated federal laws against extremism.

"A huge number of voters are calling and asking — we need to know," Safaraliyev told RIA Novosti.

Yabloko party leader Sergei Mitrokhin has called on the Investigative Committee to open a case against Zhirinovsky, and several deputies have said that they are prepared to contact the Duma ethics commission regarding his comments.

Ethics commission chairman Alexander Degtyaryov said Sunday that the commission will review any complaints that it receives on the subject.

The Chechen branch of the LDPR released a statement Sunday announcing their departure from the party and describing Zhirinovsky's comments as "an attack on the democratic principles which lie at the foundation of Russian nationhood."

On Monday, Zhirinovsky denied any interruption in the LDPR's work in Chechnya, calling the recent events "interference in the inner workings of the party."

"Only the leadership of the LDPR opens divisions around the country, no one at these locations can close them or force them to stop functioning," Zhirinovsky said.

Zhirinovsky defended his words in a statement on the LDPR website Monday, saying that he was expressing his own opinion and not offering political proposals.

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