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Kadyrov First to Get Russia's 'Child Protection' Medal

By Anna Dolgov

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Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov walks before a meeting of the state council at the Kremlin in Moscow.

Chechnya's leader Ramzan Kadyrov has become the first recipient of Russia's "child protection" medal, adding to his snazzy array of awards including medals for "kindness and humanity" and the "liberation" of Crimea, and the country's highest honor: "hero of the Russian Federation."

Kadyrov met with Russia's child rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov, who praised him for "state care" for children and the absence of runaway homeless kids on Chechnya's streets, the Chechen leader said on his Instagram blog Tuesday.

"Astakhov handed me the honorary medal 'for accomplishments in protecting the children of Russia' with Certificate No. 1," Kadyrov said. "This is a huge award for me and for the whole republic, for everyone who works with children."

It remained unclear how much credit Kadyrov could take for solving the problem of child homelessness in Chechnya. Unlike much of the rest of Russia, most people in the predominantly Muslim republic recognize their extended families or clans, and a child who becomes orphaned or runs away is usually searched for and given a home by relatives.

Kadyrov, whose father and previous Chechnya's leader Akhmad Kadyrov had fought alongside separatists in the first Chechen war of the early 1990s before defecting to the Russian side, and who was engaged in violent power struggles with Chechen government warlords during his own rise to power, also received a medal for "kindness and humanity" this summer.

The award, conferred by the Public Recognition Foundation, honored Kadyrov's contributions to the welfare of children and war veterans, and for his "highly moral civil stance," according to an announcement on Chechnya's government website.

He also received a medal "for the liberation of Crimea" in June, following Moscow's annexation of the peninsula from Ukraine. Crimea's leader Sergei Aksyonov praised Kadyrov for being among the first leaders to call him and wish success in breaking away from Ukraine, RIA Novosti reported at that time.

Kadyrov is also the holder of Russia's top distinctions — the hero of the Russian Federation, and the order of merit for the fatherland — and an array of lesser-known awards such as medals for "distinction in the protection of public order," for "services in conducting a national census," and two commemorative medals for the 850th anniversary of Moscow, marked in 1997, and the 300th anniversary of St. Petersburg, marked in 2003.

The number of awards held by Russian President Vladimir Putin is fairly modest, though it includes a street named after him in Chechnya's capital Grozny, a mountain peak named after him in Kyrgyzstan, and the French Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, the highest distinction France can confer to heads of state, bestowed by then-President Jacques Chirac.

Among Putin's Soviet predecessors, Leonid Brezhnev was the highest-decorated leader, being a four-time winner of the hero of the Soviet Union title and the holder of more than 100 other medals, which he proudly displayed during public appearances, making him the target of popular jokes about his love of glitzy "jewelry."

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