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Chechnya Announces New Tactic to 'Clear' Republic of Islamic Militants

By The Moscow Times

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Police stand guard near firefighters extinguishing a fire at a market near the Press House building, a local media agency, in the Chechen capital Grozny, Dec. 4, 2014.

Chechen authorities have announced a new method for combatting the region's underground insurgency, a system that will essentially turn commanders in the republic's security services into bounty hunters responsible for tracking down specific militants.

"Each commander will be entrusted personally with tracking down one or another militant who is on a wanted list," said an online statement published by the regional government on Thursday.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov praised the new tactic, saying in the statement that it would "bring good results" and "fully clear Chechnya of militants."

Kadyrov also called on the family members of militants to either dissuade them from joining

the insurgency or turn them in to the authorities.

"This will give them a chance to serve out the terms of punishment envisioned by law and to return home alive," Kadyrov said. "I know the insurgency can't sustain itself in hideouts without getting support from families and friends. We've seen this type of connection time and time again in each particular case," he added.

This appeal revealed a relatively soft stance compared with Kadyrov's earlier calls to have relatives deported or their houses destroyed for failing to turn in their loved ones.

Activists say that the Chechen leader's statement to this effect in early December triggered arson attacks on several people's homes in the aftermath of the Dec. 4 attack on Grozny, the capital of the Chechen republic.

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