The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Officials Split on Charlie Hebdo Protests

By Gabrielle Tetrault-Farber

January 18, 2015

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov announced that a large-scale march against the satirization of the prophet Muhammad would be held in Grozny on Monday.

Moscow authorities rejected on Saturday a request for permission to hold a protest march in defense of the feelings of religious believers, while two predominantly Muslim republics in southern Russia have gone ahead with plans for similarly-themed protests challenging French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo's contentious caricatures of the prophet Muhammad.

A group of Moscow-based activists had requested city hall's permission last week to organize a march of up to 100,000 people following the French paper's publication of a prophet Muhammed comic on the front page of its first issue since some of its most celebrated cartoonists were gunned down in an act of terror on Jan. 7, the Interfax news agency reported.

"In our opinion, the individuals whose names appear on the application have repeatedly tried to organize protests in Moscow that have been more provocative than constructive," Alexei

Mayorov, a security official with the Moscow mayor's office, was quoted as saying by Interfax on Saturday.

Meanwhile, some 15,000 people took to the streets of Magas, the capital of the restive republic of Ingushetia, on Saturday to protest Charlie Hebdo's controversial depictions of the prophet Muhammad, and at the same time, to speak out against terrorism, Interfax reported.
The protest featured thousands of demonstrators carrying signs that read "We love Muhammad," an answer to the international proliferation of the "Je suis Charlie" slogan coined in support of the 12 victims of the Paris attack.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who announced that a large-scale march against the satirization of the prophet Muhammad would be held in Grozny on Monday, expressed satisfaction with Ingushetia's mass expression of discontent.

"I am deeply grateful to the fraternal Ingushetian people who participated in this protest, who took to the streets in connection with the publication of the caricatures [of prophet Muhammad]," Kadyrov wrote on his Instagram page on Sunday, adding that he expected nearly 1 million people would participate in Monday's march.

Last week, Kadyrov rebuked the editor-in-chief of liberal-leaning Ekho Moskvy radio station, Alexei Venediktov, for polling listeners about whether international media outlets were justified in publishing comics depicting the prophet Muhammad in connection with the Charlie Hebdo massacre.

Kadyrov has been vocal on the issue since the Paris attack occurred, having also referred to former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky as a "personal enemy" and an "enemy to all the Muslims of the world" for urging media outlets to publish caricatures of the prophet Muhammad in solidarity with the tragedy-stricken publication.

"I consider people who support Charlie Hebdo's and other publications' 'rights' to offend the religious feelings of half a billion Muslims to be my personal enemies," Kadyrov wrote via Instagram on Saturday.

While marches in honor of the 12 people killed in the attack on Charlie Hebdo have been held internationally, protests against the weekly's publication of controversial caricatures have spread across Muslim communities around the world, including in Yemen, Algeria, Pakistan and Niger.

Five civilians were killed over the weekend in violent street protests in Niamey, Niger, against Charlie Hebdo, according to French newspaper Le Monde. Five others were reportedly killed in Zinder, Niger's second largest city, during similar protests, which targeted French symbols, as well as the Christian community and its places of worship.

Contact the author at g.tetraultfarber@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/01/18/russian-officials-split-on-charlie-hebdo-protests-a4297