

Putin Honors Kadyrov After He Called Nemtsov Murder Suspect 'True Patriot'

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President Vladimir Putin gave one of the country's highest awards to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov on the same weekend that Kadyrov described a suspect in the murder of an opposition leader as a "true patriot."

Putin gave Kadyrov the Order of Honor for his "professional accomplishments, social activities and many years of diligent work," the Kremlin said Monday in a statement.

Kadyrov, who has headed Chechnya for eight years, is strongly supported by the Kremlin for keeping peace in the region after decades of civil war.

But he has courted controversy with his often heavy-handed approach to ruling the mostly Muslim region, including calling for the homes of suspected terrorists' families to be "razed to the ground" after an uprising in December.

On Sunday, Kadyrov [wrote on his Instagram account](#) that Zaur Dadayev, a main suspect in the

recent killing of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, was a "courageous soldier."

Kadyrov suggested that Dadayev, who had served in Chechnya, could have been incensed with Nemtsov's comments in support of Paris-based satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, which had numerous times caricatured the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

Earlier this year, Islamist gunmen killed several people in the magazine's office as retribution for the caricatures.

Kadyrov said Sunday, referring to the suspect in the Nemtsov murder, that "everyone who knows Zaur attests that he is a deeply religious man, and like every Muslim, he was shocked by the actions of Charlie."

Dadayev, a former serviceman in the Chechen interior troops, has reportedly confessed to participating in Nemtsov's murder.

Kadyrov in the past received several other Russian state awards, including the Order of Courage and a medal for distinction in maintaining public order, and was named a "hero of the Russian Federation."

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