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Stars of Russian Documentary About Chechen Strongman Face Reprisals, Say Filmmakers

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Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov with President Vladimir Putin

Chechen authorities have launched reprisals against people who appeared in a documentary film alleging abuse and corruption by the southern Russian republic's leader Ramzan Kadyrov, the organization that made the film said.

The 26-minute film, titled "The Family," was released online on May 25 by the Open Russia foundation, which was set up by tycoon-turned-political activist Mikhail Khodorkovsky. It featured interviews with nongovernmental organization workers, journalists and witnesses, cataloguing alleged beatings and murders linked to Chechen security forces, and accused Kadyrov of having a vast personal army and embezzling a fortune in federal funds.

On Monday, the mother of Alikhan Akhmedov, a former police officer who recounted for the documentary stories of torture and other crimes allegedly committed by Chechen special police task forces and other contingents loyal to Kadyrov, was fired from her job, Open Russia

said Monday in an online statement.

"The reasons for firing Alikhan's mother were explained clearly, without concealing the real reasons: 'It's all because your son appeared in 'The Family,'" the statement said.

The Moscow offices of Open Russia were searched in April and computers confiscated. Khodorkovsky, who spent 10 years in jail on what are widely believed to have been politically motivated charges, said at the time that the search was connected to the film about Kadyrov.

On the same day the documentary was released, Kadyrov announced he would be starring in the lead role in another film and posted a link to a trailer for an action flick on his Instagram account. The new film, he said, would be called, "Whoever Doesn't Understand Will Get It."

Kadyrov has ruled the Chechen republic with an iron fist since 2007. He has repeatedly been accused of torture and other human rights abuses.

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