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7 Insights Into the Mind of Ramzan Kadyrov

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Ramzan Kadyrov

Chechen president Ramzan Kadyrov said in an interview published on Thursday that he is in favor of polygamy and would support Russian military operations in Ukraine.

In an interview with Russian news agency Interfax, the controversial leader also commented on the murder of Russian opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, the state of the Chechen economy and the prolonged absence of French actor Gerard Depardieu, who was granted Russian citizenship in January 2013, from the republic. Here are seven highlights from the interview.

1. The Chechen economy is alright, despite obstacles

During the interview, Kadyrov expressed satisfaction with the economic performance of Chechnya.

"In some areas of our economy, our growth reaches 100%, and the republic is among the top five leaders [in the country] by rate of growth," Kadyrov told Interfax.

The president, however, voiced frustration at the refusal by Russian banks to loan money to Chechnya, and the lack of profit for Chechnya from its oil resources. "They make peanuts from the geological exploration, there are no new wells, and all the profits from the existing ones go to Moscow," he said.

Kadyrov also discussed how the sanctions imposed by the West on Russia have impacted the republic's prospects for attracting investment from Northern Europe and Israel, pushing Chechnya to seek alternative partnerships. For example, the authorities are currently drafting an agreement with the United Arab Emirates in support of small and medium businesses, he explained.

2. He supports direct elections, and doesn't want to join Putin's administration

Answering a question on the republic's political structures, Kadyrov said that he supports direct elections for the heads of Russia's regional governments, even though something could prove to be a problem. "[...] they tell me that during the electoral campaign it is not possible to use the image of the president of Russia. And who should I take my photos with? Obama?" he asked during the interview. "I don't want to pose either with Obama or with Merkel. I want [a picture] with my president."

Despite his commitment to President Vladimir Putin, Kadyrov told Interfax he would never leave his position as president of Chechnya for a job in the federal government. "I don't want to work for the government, the president's administration, the State Duma, or the Federation Council," he said. "My job here [in Chechnya] is not done."

3. He would be OK with Russian military intervention in Ukraine

Kadyrov also discussed the current situation in Ukraine, showing support for a possible Russian military intervention in support of the rebels in the separatist regions of Lugansk and Donetsk.

"I have been saying this for a while: if they accuse us of aggression, let's really show them how we can fight," he told Interfax. "Then the regime in Kiev will smell gunpowder."

In response to claims that Chechen military forces have been secretly dispatched to Ukraine, Kadyrov explained that if the "Chechen battalion was truly there, everything in Donbass would have already been over, and we would have reached Kiev long ago."

4. Nemtsov's murderers are still on the loose. And they are not from Chechnya

Addressing the arrest of Zaur Dadayev, the former head of a Chechen security battalion, on suspicion of killing of Russian opposition figure Boris Nemtsov, Kadyrov appeared convinced that the authorities are after the wrong man.

"I think that we shouldn't be looking for traces of the crime in Chechnya, but rather in Ukraine, the Ukrainian security apparatus and further in the United States," he told Interfax.

Kadyrov also voiced support for former comrade-in-arms Ruslan Geremeyev, who is believed by the Russian authorities to have ordered the killing.

Kadyrov also dismissed claims that attribute the murder to him directly as untruthful. "Last time I saw him it was 14 years ago in Gudermes," he was quoted saying by Interfax.

5. He supports polygamy

In the interview, the Chechen leader noted that polygamy is permitted under Islam and could be helpful in fighting Russia's demographic crisis.

"It is not an obligation, but it is a possibility, if your physical and material conditions allow it," he explained. "Polygamy is needed to prevent a man from taking up a lover, which can cause health issues and rifts in the family and would lead him to live a lie, constantly deceiving his wife and children."

Kadyrov also commented on the May wedding of a 17-year-old girl and a 47-year-old police officer in Chechnya. The event caused controversy around the world after Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported that the girl had been married against her will. "A 17-year-old girl married a 47-year-old healthy man in Chechnya, and it's tragedy, but hardly anyone says anything about the thousands of minors abused in other regions," Kadyrov said, noting that the legal marriage age in Chechnya is 17.

6. The Committee Against Torture pays drug addicts to lie about Chechnya

Kadyrov also took issue with the work of the Committee Against Torture, an NGO whose office in the Chechen capital Grozny were vandalized earlier this month. Kadyrov believes the organization has a particular scheme they use to earn foreign grants. "They find people who have been left behind, for example drug addicts, and talk them into writing declarations against Kadyrov in exchange for money," he told Interfax.

7. He's sad Gerard Depardieu hasn't been seen in Chechnya for a while

Even though Kadyrov still considers Depardieu a very good friend of Chechnya, he regrets the fact that the French actor hasn't returned to the republic following his highly publicized visit in 2013. "It's a pity that he doesn't show in the republic," he was quoted saying by the news agency. During a visit in May 2013, Kadyrov gave Depardieu a five-room apartment in the center of Grozny.

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