

# EU Ambassador to Russia Demands Reaction to Kadyrov's 'Murder Threats'

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Russian opposition leader Mikhail Kasyanov

The European Union's ambassador to Russia has demanded a response from Russian authorities to a video by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov showing Russian opposition politicians in the crosshairs of a sniper rifle.

The video posted on Instagram on Sunday showed Mikhail Kasyanov, a former prime minister turned opposition party leader, with another journalist and critic of President Vladimir Putin, Vladimir Kara-Murza.

In a telephone conversation with Kasyanov, Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas said “he was appalled by such disgusting unveiled murder threats which should not be tolerated,” according to a statement published Tuesday on the website of the EU delegation to Russia.

“[Ušackas] expressed his hope for the Russian authorities and law enforcement bodies to

react immediately,” the statement continued, adding that he “considers that recent statements by Kadyrov toward the Russian political opposition and civil society are unacceptable in the democratic state.”

The British Embassy in Russia also chipped in on Tuesday, tweeting that threats “should be strongly condemned by Russian authorities.”

The video, which accused Kasyanov and Kara-Murza of soliciting cash in Strasbourg to fund opposition activity in Russia, was the latest in a stream of menacing statements by Kadyrov against politicians and journalists critical of Putin, whom he has called “enemies of the people” and Western lackeys who should be interned at psychiatric hospitals.

Kasyanov in a Facebook post called the sniper crosshairs video “incitement to murder.”

Instagram removed it on Monday for breaking the site's rules on threatening content, prompting Kadyrov to mock, “Here it is, the celebrated American freedom of speech!”

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov has declined to comment on Kadyrov's Instagram posts, and Putin last month praised his “effective work” in Chechnya, where Kadyrov's dictatorial rule has been criticized by human rights activists.

The video of Kasyanov comes after Boris Nemtsov, another former prime minister and opposition leader, was killed last February outside the walls of the Kremlin. Five Chechen men have been charged with his murder.

It is not clear why Kadyrov unleashed his attacks on the opposition last month. Analysts have suggested he is reminding Moscow of his and Chechnya's loyalty — and belligerence — to keep subsidies flowing to the region despite a recession and cuts to government spending.

It may also have to do with his own position — the Vedomosti business newspaper reported on Tuesday that Kadyrov's current five-year term as head of Chechnya will end in April, when he will have to be appointed or dismissed by Putin as acting leader of the republic before an election is held in the region.

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