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# Human Rights Activist Running for Parliament to Challenge Chechen Ruler to a Debate

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A human rights activist running for the State Duma says she plans to challenge the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, to a public debate. Svetlana Gannushkina, who is running in Chechnya on the ticket of the liberal opposition party Yabloko, told the news agency RIA Novosti that she plans to present her challenge formally on Thursday, Sept. 7.

Ramzan Kadyrov has ruled Chechnya since 2007. His father, Akhmad Kadyrov, Chechnya's first president, was assassinated in 2004. In Russia's parliamentary elections this month, Kadyrov is up for re-election as head of the republic, and he also appears on the candidate list of United Russia, the country's ruling political party.

Gannushkina is a mathematician and a human rights activist. She was reported to have been a serious contender for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 for her work with the group "Memorial," which she helped found. In 2004, the United Nations named Memorial the winner of the

year's Nansen Refugee Award for Gannushkina's work with refugees and displaced people in Russia.

Human Rights Watch recently released a report detailing a new Chechen crackdown on critics — including "abductions and forced disappearances" — ahead of elections on Sept. 18. All 450 seats in the Duma are up for grabs in a mixed elections system: half the deputies will be elected by party lists (in a proportional system) and the other half will be elected in single-member constituencies (a plurality system).

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