

Chechnya Opens Investigation Into Kidnappings, Murders of Gays

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Anton Podgaiko / TASS

The regional prosecutor's office in Chechnya will investigate reports that local authorities are carrying out mass arrests of suspected gay men in the North Caucasian republic.

The Chechen prosecutor launched the investigation after the Novaya Gazeta newspaper published its shocking report on anti-gay repressions, Russia's State Prosecutor's office told the RIA Novosti news agency.

Both Novaya Gazeta and Tatiana Moskalkova, Russia's human rights ombudswoman, formally petitioned for an investigation of “the mass kidnapping of people in Chechnya,” a State Prosecutor's office spokesperson [told](#) the RBC news site.

On April 8, Dmitry Muratov, Novaya Gazeta's editor appealed to Russian Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika to force the Investigative Committee to open an investigation into the rights violations in Chechnya.

Moskalkova also filed a petition, but only to determine whether Novaya Gazeta had submitted a petition, the State Prosecutor's office spokesperson said.

Published on April 1, Novaya Gazeta's article alleged that over 100 gay men had been detained in Chechnya and at least three had been killed. The allegations were confirmed by numerous sources in Chechen state agencies and among rights defenders, the newspaper said.

Novaya Gazeta later published an update, reporting that detainees had faced torture in secret prisons and had often only been freed after their families paid enormous ransoms.

Related article: [Detained, Tortured, Killed: How Chechnya Cracked Down on Gays](#)

Novaya Gazeta's story has sparked outrage around the world but met with hostility in Chechnya, raising concerns that the Chechen prosecutor's office investigation will not be honest.

Alvi Karimov, Chechen Leader Ramzan Kadyrov's press secretary, called reports of the anti-gay crackdown an “absolute lie” and said gays do not exist in Chechnya.

Kheda Saratova, a member of Chechnya's human rights council, suggested that Chechen authorities and society would relate “with understanding” to a family that kills its gay relative. The human rights council later announced that it could find no confirmation of Novaya Gazeta's story.

On April 13, Novaya Gazeta published an open letter stating that it was facing threats in connection with its reporting on Chechnya. On April 3, a group of Chechen Muslim clerics and community leaders had signed a resolution that promised “retribution will come for the true instigators,” which Novaya Gazeta considered a threat of violence against its journalists.

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