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Four More Secret Jails Illegally Holding Gay Men Discovered in Chechnya — Reports

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Chechen demonstrators hold portraits of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chechen regional leader Ramzan Kadyrov as they listen to an orator during a massive rally in Grozny. **Musa Sadulayev / AP**

Gay men in Russia's Chechen Republic are being illegally detained in at least six secret prisons across the region,
the Novaya Gazeta newspaper has reported.

The newspaper reported on April 1 that hundreds of men were being detained, tortured and even killed in a government-backed crackdown on the LGBT community.
The claims
centered on two jails in the Chechen villages of Argun and Tsotsi-Yurt.

Now Novaya Gazeta has claimed that at least four more prisons are illegally holding gay men due to their sexual orientation.

The men, who face physical beatings and electric shocks, are only released after their families offer large bribes to the police, the outlet wrote.

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The newspaper also claimed that Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov knew about the crackdown, despite his repeated denials that such jails did not exist.

In a meeting with Putin, Kadyrov named one of the men which had allegedly been killed due to his sexual orientation, Novaya Gazeta reported. The man's identity was known to journalists, but had not been published by the press.

“The very fact that Kadyrov was the first to name [this man] proves that the head of Chechnya was aware of this situation,” Novaya Gazeta wrote.

The outlet also reported that Magomed Daudov — the speaker of the Chechen parliament and a member of Kadyrov's inner circle — had visited one of the prisons where gay men were being held.

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Chechen authorities have denied the claims, with Kadyrov's spokesperson Alvi Karimov claiming that gay people "simply do not exist" in the republic.

"If there were such people in Chechnya, their relatives would send them somewhere from whence they could not return.”

Chechnya Human Rights Council member Kheda Saratova also said the republic’s citizens “would take a tolerant view” of people who murdered their gay relatives, later explaining that this was due to "homosexuals’ deranged condition.”

Novaya Gazeta journalists have faced a number of death threats following the reports, with envelopes full of white powder sent to their offices on a number of occasions.

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