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The Kremlin Says There's No Reason Not to Trust Chechnya's Leader

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Ramzan Kadyrov / Instagram

The Russian news media is abuzz with reports that Chechen security officials are cracking down en masse on local gay men. Chechen officials have responded by calling the allegations "slanderous," insisting that there are no gays in Chechnya, while religious leaders have made vague death threats against the journalists who broke the story.

On Monday, Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters that the Kremlin has "no reason to doubt" Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya's longtime ruler, when he denies that his police are terrorizing gay men.

"We have no reason to believe that Kadyrov would provide incorrect information of any kind to the head of state," Peskov told reporters Monday.

"Until there are real witness statements on this matter, with evidence, we have no reason not to trust the head of the republic [Kadyrov]," Peskov explained.

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The newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported on April 1 that more than 100 men had been starved, beaten, and tortured with electric shocks in a government-backed crackdown on local gays. The outlet later reported that gay men were being held in at least six different unofficial prisons throughout Chechnya.

So far, the Kremlin has refused to investigate the claims, instead surrendering full police control to the Chechen authorities, arguing that victims attacked by the police should "report the issue" to local officials.

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