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Kadyrov Calls for Purging Chechnya of Gay Men, But Insists None Live There

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Kadyrov says if there are any gay people in Chechnya they should be removed in order to "purify the nation's blood." **@yashar / Twitter**

Ramzan Kadyrov, leader of the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, has called for ridding his region of gay people "to purify the [nation's] blood."

Kadyrov dismissed media reports that gay men are being persecuted in Chechnya, saying there are no gay men there.

The Chechen leader made the comments in an interview with HBO TV's "Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel" due to be broadcast on Tuesday. A preview of the interview was made available to the Washington Post.

"The [reports on the persecution of gay men in Chechnya are] nonsense," Kadyrov told the interviewer. "We don't have any gays."

But, he added, if "there are any take them to Canada, praise be to God. Take them far from us

so we don't have them at home. To purify our blood, if there are any here, take them."

In April, Russian investigative newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported on secret prisons in Chechnya where gay men were allegedly detained and tortured.

Last week, Novaya Gazeta published the names of 27 detainees it believes were murdered by Chechen security forces.

"Do you not get concerned when you read these accounts of young men who say they've been tortured for days, does it concern you as a matter of law and order?" the interviewer asks an increasingly irritated Kadyrov.

"They are devils, they're for sale, they're not people. Let them be cursed for what they say about us," Kadyrov responds.

The HBO report focuses on how the Chechen leader uses mixed martial arts (MMA) to promote his conservative political agenda.

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