

Young Men Detained For Criticizing Kadyrov in Online Messenger

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Around 10 young men were detained in Chechnya for allegedly criticizing the republic's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, in online messengers, the [Kavkaz.Realii](#) news outlet reported Tuesday.

The men were reportedly detained earlier in July in the North Caucasus republic's capital Grozny and in the city of Shali for sharing video clips critical of Kadyrov, Kavkaz.Realii reported, citing an anonymous local source.

Earlier this month, the Novaya Gazeta newspaper published the names of 27 individuals reportedly killed by Chechen law enforcement officers in early 2017. Most of the victims are believed to have been detained as part of a sweeping anti-terror raid that began late last year.

The Memorial rights group said on Monday it had verified that 13 individuals listed in the newspaper's report had been arrested. Four died while in police detention, but nine remain unaccounted for, the [group](#) said.

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“We have been corresponding with the respective Chechen agencies for six months to cast light on their fate,” the rights group said in a statement on its website. “The only way to dispel suspicion is to show those people are alive.”

A Novaya Gazeta report in April claimed that dozens of gay men in Chechnya had been held in secret prisons and tortured as part of a massive anti-gay crackdown.

Kadyrov dismissed allegations that gay men are being persecuted in Chechnya in an interview with HBO in July, saying there are no gay men in his republic. “The reports [on the persecution of gay men in Chechnya] are nonsense,” Kadyrov told the interviewer. “We don't have any gays.”

In the same interview, he called for ridding his region of gay people “to purify the [nation's] blood.”

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