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Kremlin Pours Cold Water on Kadyrov's Retirement Plans

It was not the first time that Kadyrov had announced his resignation

November 27, 2017



Ramzan Kadyrov / Kremlin Press Service

Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman leader of Chechnya, said on Sunday that his job is over and that it was time for him to step aside.

A rebel turned gamekeeper, Kadyrov has been a central and controversial figure in the Caucasus, tasked by the Kremlin to keep peace in the region after two secessionist wars – a job he has done, but at a high cost in blood. Kadyrov runs a police state and is suspected of being behind multiple high-profile murders, including those of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov and journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

Kadyrov won a new five-year term last year, but said that now that Chechnya is stable his job is done and it is time for another to take his place.

"There was a time when people like me were needed – to fight, to bring order," the state-

run RIA Novosti news agency cited him as saying in an interview with public broadcaster Rossia-1 that aired Sunday in the Russian Far East and was cited by Bloomberg. “Now we have order.”

Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday that Kadyrov "plans to continue working as the country’s president orders him," adding that the Chechen would "remain serving as the republic’s acting head."

President Vladimir Putin appointed Kadyrov to run the republic in 2007 after his father, the previous president, was assassinated by a bomb buried under his seat in the football stadium in May 2004.

While he successfully brought stability, his entire career has been dogged by controversy. Human rights groups accuse him of using death squads to quell rebels after taking office and most recently his administration has been accused of homophobic pogroms where gay men were targeted, beaten and even killed.

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This is not the first time that Kadyrov has announced his resignation, as he made similar statements five years ago. Analysts speculate that the announcement may be a gambit to extract more budget funds from the center rather than a genuine plan.

The Kremlin has held its nose with Kadyrov, as it deems the region to be unmanageable by traditional means. The Kremlin needs a local in control and there is no obvious replacement candidate and one cannot be imposed from the outside.

During the interview Kadyrov was also asked about the murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, who was shot under the walls of the Kremlin in 2015. Kadyrov maintained that the five Chechens arrested and convicted of the murder this summer were innocent.

“I am more than certain that they have nothing to do with it,” Kadyrov said in the interview. “According to my information, these guys are totally innocent.”

Kadyrov enjoys a lavish lifestyle surrounded by cronies, and keeps exotic pets such as leopards. Following the end of the second Chechen war the Kremlin lavished money on the republic, in particular to rebuild the capital Grozny, which had been flattened in the fighting.

At the time, a report written by Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak that leaked to the press concluded that the Russian government had spent upwards of $1billion on the republic but that this had had “no economic impact at all.”

Kadyrov fought with the rebels against the government in the first Chechen war but defected to the government’s side in the second.

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