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Chechen Leader Kadyrov Says Human Rights Work 'Won't Fly' in His Region

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Ramzan Kadyrov / Chris Ratcliffe / Bloomberg

Chechnya's strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov has warned that human rights activists will not be able to pursue their activities in his region, days after the arrest of a local activist and an arson attack against a human rights office in a nearby region.

Russia's renowned Memorial human rights group said that Wednesday's torching of its office in the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia served as a signal to drive the NGO out of the volatile region. Last week, the head of Memorial's branch in Chechnya, Oyub Titiyev, was arrested on drug charges his supporters say are fabricated.

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On Wednesday, Kadyrov called Titiyev a "drug addict" and expressed surprise that "people who consider themselves Chechen work with" human rights activists.

“They need to know that their work won’t fly in our republic,” Kadyrov was cited as saying in televised comments by the Kavkaz.Realii news outlet.

Following the attack on Memorial in the Ingush town of Nazran, Amnesty International called on Russia to investigate what it labelled a “coordinated assault” on the Russian NGO.

“Any failure to do so would raise suspicions about the authorities’ possible involvement,” said Anna Neistat, Amnesty International’s Senior Director for Research.

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