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Over 100 People Fled Chechnya Since Anti-Gay Crackdown, LGBT Network Says

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Peter Kovalyov / Inerpress / TASS

More than 100 gay and bisexual Chechen men and women have fled the country to escape persecution based on their sexual orientation in the past year, a leading Russian LGBT rights group has said.

An investigative newspaper report last year alleged that Chechen authorities had detained and tortured over 100 gay men. The St. Petersburg-based LGBT Network claimed in the summer of 2017 that at least 200 gay people were held in secret prisons throughout the mostly Muslim region, where many may have been beaten and electrocuted.

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“The Network’s activists evacuated 119 people from the region and accommodated the survivors in shelters located in the central part of Russia,” it said in its updated report on LGBT persecution in the North Caucasus published Tuesday.

Thirty-six people suffered “abusive treatment” in secret prisons, the LGBT Network said, citing testimonies that, according to the NGO, proves the abuses were “directed by the highest officials in Chechnya.”

The NGO said it is continuing to document reports of detentions in Chechnya on the grounds of sexual orientation.

“The officers of the law continue visiting the houses of some previously detained survivors to learn if they stayed or left the region,” the report says.Chechnya’s strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov denies that human rights are flouted in the region.

His spokesman has said there could be no attacks on gay men because there were no gay men in the republic.

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