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Chechen Police Brandish Pipes in Coronavirus Street Patrols

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Instagram

Police officers armed with plastic pipes in Russia's republic of Chechnya are patrolling the streets to observe compliance with the region's coronavirus quarantine, Russian media reported this weekend.

The majority Muslim region enacted a strict quarantine Saturday with steep fines for venturing outside. Videos that circulated online starting late Friday showed police convoys advising residents to stay home and masked men in uniforms brandishing white pipes on deserted Chechen streets.

"The quarantine is in effect. We were asked to make it clear to those who don't understand with this tube," said one of the video's authors, according to a translation by the Baza Telegram channel and the Mediazona news website.

Novaya Gazeta — the independent newspaper which broke the news about Chechnya's alleged torture and extrajudicial killings of LGBT minorities in 2017 — said Chechen wardens use the

same plastic pipes in the region's secret prisons.

Citing eyewitness footage, Novaya Gazeta reported that pipe-carrying officers were also pulling drivers over for not wearing face masks.

Chechnya has registered nine coronavirus cases as of Monday. Russia's overall number of cases totaled 1,836.

President Vladimir Putin declared a nationwide paid "non-working week" and Moscow's mayor introduced an indefinite citywide quarantine starting Monday in an effort to slow the spread of the deadly pandemic. Russia's prime minister advised other regions to follow Moscow's example and institute similar lockdowns.

Earlier this month, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov dismissed worries about the coronavirus, advising people to drink lemon and honey water to strengthen their immune systems and to eat garlic for "pure blood."

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