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HBO Airs Trailer for Oscar-Nominated Director's Chechnya Gay Purge Doc

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“Welcome to Chechnya” premieres on HBO on June 30. **Screenshot HBO**

HBO has aired a trailer for its upcoming documentary on the anti-gay crackdown in Russia’s republic of Chechnya that was produced using groundbreaking face-swapping technology to protect the safety of its subjects.

Oscar-nominated American director David France's documentary "Welcome to Chechnya” traces attempts by a Moscow-based LGBT association to exfiltrate gay Chechens to safety. Russian investigative outlets have since 2017 reported on the torture and killing of Chechens suspected of being gay, which local leaders deny, claiming that no homosexuals live in Chechnya.

Embed:

The Russian region tightly controlled by strongman Ramzan Kadyrov has carried out "a government-led, brutal campaign" against the LGBT community since 2017, France has said.

"It is the first time since Hitler that members of the LGBT community are being rounded up for extermination," he told AFP in February.

France, who began filming the documentary in August 2017, deployed the face-replacement technology in film to disguise the identities of his subjects fearing for their safety.

“They knew it was not enough to get away... This is an effort to liquidate LGBTQ Chechens, as a way to cleanse the blood of the Chechen people,” France told Indiewire in January.

“Even should they arrive in the West in Paris or Toronto or Berlin, if it were known they were still alive, they would be pursued,” he had said. “I promised them I would disguise them.”

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After being hidden in secret refuges, more than 150 people in the Muslim-majority region have been able to apply for political asylum abroad with the help of the Moscow-based activists.

Same-sex sexual activity is not a crime in Russia, but rights advocates say a law limiting the dissemination of information on LGBT+ issues to young people has created fertile ground for homophobic attacks.

France received an Academy Award nomination for his 2013 documentary "How to Survive a Plague."

The “Welcome to Chechnya” trailer was viewed around 100,000 times in less than 24 hours.

“Welcome to Chechnya” premieres on June 30, about year after “Chernobyl,” the widely popular and critically acclaimed HBO miniseries about the 1986 Soviet nuclear disaster.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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