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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Chechen Dissident Shot Dead in Austria

Austrian police have arrested two Russian suspects.

By AFP

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One suspect was arrested in the city of Linz. **DPA**

Austrian police have arrested two Russians from Chechnya over the fatal shooting of a Chechen dissident, officials said on Sunday.

The 43-year-old asylum seeker, a vocal critic of the Chechen Republic's government, was found dead with gunshot wounds near the capital Vienna on Saturday.

Police arrested a 47-year-old Russian from Chechnya in the city of Linz, some 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Vienna, shortly after finding the body.

A second Russian, 37, also from Chechnya living in Austria, was detained Sunday for investigations into the murder of his fellow Russian citizen.

Police and prosecutors said the crime was still under investigation and it was too early to comment on any motive.

The dead dissident -- identified by Austrian prosecution as Martin B. -- had given evidence in a 2017 murder case in Ukraine, the Ukrainian interior ministry told AFP.

In that case, a gun attack near Kiev, a volunteer soldier, who had been accused of plotting to murder Russian President Vladimir Putin, was injured and his wife killed.

The Austria shooting comes amid growing concern over the security of Chechen dissidents living in exile.

In February, an exiled Chechen blogger also critical of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov fended off an attacker armed with a hammer.

A month earlier, Chechen opposition leader Imran Aliev was found dead in a hotel room in the northern French city of Lille, stabbed 135 times.

Chechnya is a predominantly Muslim Russian republic in the North Caucasus. Two wars in the 1990s triggered a wave of emigration, with many Chechens heading for western Europe.

More Chechens have fled into exile in recent years because of disagreements with pro-Kremlin Kadyrov, who rights activists accuse of repeated rights violations.

In Austria, Chechen dissident Umar Israilov was shot dead on a Vienna street in 2009.

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