

Ex-Chechen Policeman Testifies to 'Worst Crime of Post-War Chechnya' – Novaya Gazeta

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The republic of Chechnya, which was devastated by two separatist wars in the 1990s, enjoys a certain level of autonomy in exchange for loyalty to the Kremlin. **Ruslan Kasumov / TASS**

The investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper on Monday has published a former Chechen police officer's [testimony](#) to the extrajudicial killings of dozens of detainees four years ago.

The account of Suleiman Gezmakhmayev, a former staff sergeant of the Akhmad Kadyrov Police Patrol Service Regiment, adds damning evidence to Novaya's investigations claiming that Chechen security officials executed 27 of more than 100 people detained in late 2016 and early 2017 anti-terror raids.

Related article: [Novaya Gazeta Publishes New Evidence of Chechen Extrajudicial Killings](#)

Gezmakhmayev said he had taken part in detaining and guarding at least 56 detainees in the

basement of the Kadyrov Regiment gymnasium. They were subjected to starvation, electrocution and beatings with hoses, according to Gezmakhayev.

Novaya reported that an oversight inspection initiated at its request had examined every Kadyrov Regiment building except for the gymnasium.

Citing his friend and fellow sergeant Suleiman Saraliyev, Gezmakhayev said 13 so-called militant commanders — whose names appeared on Novaya Gazeta's list of victims — had been executed at the Kadyrov Regiment barracks.

“He [Saraliyev] said the first one or two ‘amirs’ had been shot, after which the regiment commander said it was better not to stain the room with blood,” Gezmakhayev said.

“So the other ‘amirs’ were strangled with a sports rope,” Novaya quoted Gezmakhayev’s written testimony as saying.

Saraliyev was later accused of homosexual ties and killed in March 2017, Gezmakhayev said.

“They could have disposed of him as gay because he had told of detained Chechens’ executions,” he wrote.

Novaya said Gezmakhayev and his family’s return to Russia after Europe rejected their asylum applications helped the newspaper with finding “evidence of the worst crime committed in post-war Chechnya.”

The Kremlin said Monday it was aware of Novaya’s report but denied that it warranted an investigation.

“We’ve seen the publication and the relevant authorities have probably seen it too. If they consider the publication as grounds for inspections, they can take place,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

“Since we don’t belong to the [law enforcement] bodies, this is not our prerogative,” news agencies quoted Peskov as saying.

Russia’s chief investigative body, the Investigative Committee, refused in 2018 to open a probe into the alleged killings at Novaya’s request.

Chechen authorities have denied that the individuals named in Novaya’s investigations were ever detained.

Under strongman Ramzan Kadyrov’s leadership, the republic of Chechnya has over the years become the subject of multiple reports of human rights abuses. The North Caucasus region, which was devastated by two separatist wars in the 1990s, enjoys a certain level of autonomy in exchange for loyalty to the Kremlin.

Hours after the publication went live, Novaya said its Moscow office was [attacked](#) with a toxic chemical substance. Emergency, police and security officers have been deployed to determine the source of the alleged attack.

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