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Chechnya Detains Kidnapped Gay Men's Relatives – Rights Group

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Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isayev fled Chechnya last year but were arrested and returned in February on accusations that activists say were fabricated. **lgbtnet.org**

Chechen authorities have detained dozens of relatives of two gay men who were forcibly returned to the southern Russian region to face terrorism charges, a rights group told the independent Dozhd broadcaster Wednesday.

The Moscow-based LGBT Network rights group said Salekh Magamadov, 20, and Ismail Isayev, 18, fled Chechnya last year but were arrested and returned in February on accusations of aiding an illegal armed group. The brothers face up to 15 years in prison if convicted on the charges that rights activists call fabricated.

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The LGBT Network told Dozhd that 20 of Magamadov and Isayev's relatives were held in an unknown location for two hours Tuesday as police sought the whereabouts of the men's

parents.

Magamadov and Isayev's parents fled the republic of Chechnya after police forced their father to waive his right to counsel, Dozhd reported.

The men's mother Zara Magamadova had filmed an appeal to Russia's human rights commissioner last week seeking her sons' release and accusing the authorities of "fabricating" the legal case against them.

"I'm asking anyone who can help, please help me see my sons alive and in good health," she said.

Magamadov and Isayev's 20 relatives were released overnight, according to the Caucasus Knot news website.

Europe's top human rights court ordered Russia last month to grant relatives, lawyers and doctors access to Isayev and Magamadov.

The LGBT Network said authorities accused the men of operating a social media channel critical of government officials and tortured them in 2020 because of their sexual orientation.

Chechnya's strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has faced years of media investigations into the imprisonment and torture of homosexuals in secret prisons, has claimed that his region is exclusively heterosexual.

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