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Chechnya Grants State Protection to 'Kidnapped' Gay Men – Reports

April 29, 2021



Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isayev were detained and returned to Chechnya earlier this year in what rights groups called a kidnapping. **lgbtnet.org**

Authorities in Russia's republic of Chechnya have granted state protection to two gay men facing threats of familial "honor killings" after they were forcibly returned to their home region, the MBKh Media news website reported Thursday.

Salekh Magamadov and Ismail Isayev had fled Chechnya for Nizhny Novgorod northeast of Moscow last summer after they were allegedly tortured by Chechen special police. They were seized and returned to Chechnya earlier this year in what rights groups called a kidnapping.

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The LGBT Network rights group, which had helped the two men flee, successfully petitioned Chechnya's Investigative Committee to grant state protection to them, claiming they are now at risk of "honor killings" by their relatives.

“The state has recognized that Magamadov and Isayev are under threat of danger,” MBKh Media quoted LGBT Network lawyer Alexander Nemov as saying.

It is not yet clear what kind of protection the two men will receive.

The LGBT Network has said that the official reason for Magamadov and Isayev’s initial arrest and torture by Chechen special police in April 2020 was for running an opposition Telegram channel, but in reality they were detained because of their sexual orientation.

The Muslim-majority republic of Chechnya has been at the center of several high-profile investigations into alleged mass LGBT persecution since 2017. The region’s strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov has dismissed the reports and denies that homosexuals exist at all in Chechnya.

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