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Chechnya Offers Cash for Best Portrait of Strongman Kadyrov

By AFP

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Ramzan Kadyrov has ruled the predominantly Muslim region of Russia for nearly two decades, forming a cult around the family name. **Yelena Afonina / TASS**

A Chechen official has announced that the volatile North Caucasus region in Russia is offering thousands of dollars to the artist that completes the best portrait of its strongman, Ramzan Kadyrov.

Kadyrov has ruled the predominantly Muslim region of Russia for nearly two decades, forming a cult around the family name and his father, Akhmat, who was assassinated in 2004.

Chechnya has a mosque, football club, and stadium named after Kadyrov's father, a separatist leader who fought against the Russian army before switching sides and becoming the first president of the Chechen republic.

The region's parliament speaker Magomed Daudov wrote on Instagram late Tuesday that the

competition was the result of "numerous appeals" from Chechens living abroad.

Daudov said artists who did the best portraits of Kadyrov, his father, and his mother, Ayman, would each be awarded 500,000 rubles ($6,800).

He said the contest – open to Chechens living abroad – was intended to "strengthen their knowledge of the history of their native land and to preserve cultural ties with the Motherland."

Last year, Chechnya held a children's poetry contest for the best poems about Kadyrov's mother to mark her 67th birthday. Winners received cash prizes and smartphones.

Ramzan Kadyrov, 44, rose to power in Chechnya following two wars between Russian forces and separatists in the 1990s and early 2000s and is seen as an important player on Russia's political landscape.

The two wars triggered a wave of emigration, with many Chechens leaving for western Europe.

Kadyrov's regime has been accused of rights violations like extrajudicial killings and of persecuting activists and sexual minorities.

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