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Kremlin Confirms Chechnya's Kadyrov Met Putin Amid 'Beheading' Scandal

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. **kremlin.ru**

The Kremlin appeared to stand behind Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov on Thursday as the strongman faced a string of scandals over his threats against media organizations and the family of a retired judge.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman confirmed, after denying it a day earlier, that Kadyrov met Putin in the Kremlin on Wednesday evening. They discussed "applied economic affairs and issues of Chechnya's socio-economic development," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, saying "Kadyrov came with specific topics on economic projects."

The sit-down came one day after Adam Delimkhanov, a ruling party lawmaker representing Chechnya in Russian parliament, threatened to "cut the heads off" the family of Chechen anti-torture activist Abubakar Yangulbaev and his father Saydi Yangulbaev, a retired federal judge.

Related article: Russian Lawmaker Threatens to 'Cut the Heads Off' Chechen Activist's Family

The State Duma's ethics committee has said it plans to look into Delimkhanov's threats "if it receives a relevant request."

Five senior Chechen government, security and law enforcement officials later appeared on video backing Delimkhanov's threat to decapitate members of the Yangulbaev family. Chechen media also shared videos Wednesday showing what it called a 400,000-person rally against the family in Grozny, Chechnya's administrative center, including members of the Yangulbaev family renouncing the retired judge.

Kadyrov himself has called on countries to return the family's members who fled Russia, saying "shielding them means supporting terrorists," and has threatened the Yangulbaev family with "jail or burial."

He has also recently threatened journalists from the independent Novaya Gazeta and Dozhd news outlets, calling them "terrorists" and saying that he "has always destroyed terrorists and their accomplices, and will continue to do so."

A Chechen board of judges is scheduled to consider stripping ex-judge Saydi Yangulbaev's immunity on Thursday afternoon.

His wife, Zarema Musaeva, reportedly faces up to 10 years in prison after being violently detained in western Russia and forcibly brought to Chechnya last month.

In the only allusion to the "beheading" scandal, Peskov said Putin and Kadyrov discussed "topics related to the work of law enforcement agencies."

Peskov declined to comment further when asked whether the president discussed the threats against the Yangulbaev family with the regional leader, saying:

"I gave the wording on this conversation that I could give. I have nothing more to add."

The Kremlin spokesman also took umbrage at a question whether Putin fears Kadyrov, according to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

"It's unclear why the president should fear a regional head," Peskov said.

Kadyrov claimed later Thursday that Putin "supported" him on "thorny" issues that needed his involvement, but didn't specify further.

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