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150K People Sign Petition Calling for Kadyrov's Dismissal

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A petition that calls on the Kremlin to dismiss Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov has gained over 100,000 signatures in the two days since it was launched.

Kadyrov has been at the center of several controversies in recent weeks, particularly threats made against human rights activists and journalists.

Former Moscow opposition deputy Ilya Yashin launched the petition on Sunday. It states that Kadyrov, who has "turned the region into a separate state," is "not suited to his position" and "cannot be a civil servant," and asks President Vladimir Putin to sign a decree to remove him from office.

As of Wednesday morning, the petition has received over 150,000 signatures.

While Yashin called this "a very impressive dynamic," analysts have voiced skepticism toward the petition's potential to achieve its goal.

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The petition is unlikely to have an impact since there are no legal grounds for Kadyrov's resignation or dismissal, Alexei Malashenko, the chief researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations, told the Kavkaz Uzel (Caucasus Knot) news website.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday said that the Kremlin would not consider the petition, telling reporters that such "impersonal voting" can be influenced by bots.

Kadyrov's strongman rule over his region — which was devastated by two separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s — re-entered the spotlight last month when Chechen security officers detained the mother of Chechen anti-torture activist Abubakar Yangulbaev in western Russia and forcibly returned her to Chechnya.

Adam Delimkhanov, a lawmaker in Russia's parliament and a close Kadyrov ally, threatened to "cut off the heads" of Yangulbaev's family members, a threat later backed by senior Chechen government, security and law enforcement officials.

Yangulbaev's father, a retired federal judge, was then stripped of his immunity.

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 family with "jail or burial."

He 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."

On Friday, Novaya Gazeta journalist Yelena Milashina fled Russia out of safety concerns following Kadyrov's threats.

Later Tuesday, Yangulbaev said he plans to file for Kadyrov to be placed on the international criminal wanted list, citing statistics from Novaya Gazeta attributing the high number of disappeared Chechens to Kadyrov's policies.

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