

Fall of Mariupol a Matter of Hours, Chechnya's Kadyrov Says

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Smoke belches over the Azovstal iron and steel plant. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov [said](#) Thursday that Russian forces are on the verge of capturing the last Ukrainian stronghold in the devastated port city of Mariupol after weeks of bitter fighting.

“Azovstal [steel plant] will be under the full control of the Russian Armed Forces before or after noon today,” Kadyrov said in an audio message on Telegram released shortly after midnight in Chechnya.

“This is bad news for the west and Europe, but it’s good news for normal people who want to live in peace,” the Kremlin loyalist said.

Control of Mariupol would provide Russia with a land bridge between annexed Crimea and the pro-Moscow separatist regions in eastern Ukraine.

The last defenders of Mariupol are holed up in Azovstal, and are refusing the Russian

military's calls to surrender.

Russian state-run media [published](#) a video Wednesday showing what appeared to be civilians leaving the plant.

Kadyrov, who is accused of presiding over torture and executions in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, has had a rich history of predicting the final fall of Mariupol.

He claimed last month to have traveled to Mariupol himself, posting photos of what he said was the badly-damaged city.

Russian media outlets estimate Kadyrov has promised to capture Mariupol at least [26 times](#) since the invasion of Ukraine began in late February.

"I've been telling you and you didn't believe," the 45-year-old strongman said in the Telegram audio message.

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