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Chechen Leader Says Pope ‘Fell Victim to Propaganda'

By AFP

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Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov **vk.com/ramzan**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov on Wednesday said Pope Francis "fell victim to propaganda" after the pontiff singled out the alleged role of Russian ethnic minorities in the Ukraine offensive.

Kadyrov, who rules the Muslim-majority Chechnya in Russia with widespread violation of human rights, has been one of Moscow's most vocal supporters in the campaign.

"The Pope called the Chechens and Buryats the cruelest in the Russian army," Kadyrov wrote on social media, "he just fell victim to propaganda."

Chechen units — including Kadyrov's own militia with a sinister reputation, the "Kadyrovtsi" — are fighting alongside regular Russian forces in Ukraine.

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Pope Francis in an interview published Monday said that some of the "cruelest" actors among Russia's ranks in Ukraine "are not of the Russian tradition," but minorities like "the Chechens, the Buryats and so on."

"Everyone is deeply religious" in the ranks of the Chechen forces, Kadyrov responded, "and each fighter knows that in times of war, one should not forget about honor, dignity and even respect for the enemy."

"It's shameful that a world-famous religious personality does not know about the attitude of Muslims toward the enemy."

Kadyrov regularly called for the most drastic tactics to be used in Ukraine.

He also said he was sending his three teenage sons — ages 14, 15 and 16 — to the front.

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