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Chechen Strongman Appears in New Video Amid Speculation of Ill Health

By AFP

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Ramzan Kadyrov. **Ramzan Kadyrov / VK**

Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov on Sunday released new video footage in which he smiled and recommended everyone practise sport, in an apparent move to quash speculation about his ill health.

Speculation has swirled for months that the hugely influential 46-year-old head of Chechnya accused by rights groups of running a "totalitarian regime" might be ill.

On Sunday, two videos appeared on Kadyrov's Telegram channel.

Wearing a raincoat, he was seen in the first video strolling in an unidentified location. He smiled but his face appeared puffy.

In the second video he was heard speaking Chechen and then saying in Russian "practice sport."

"I strongly recommend that everyone who cannot distinguish the truth from lies on the internet go for a walk, get some fresh air and put their thoughts in order," said the words accompanying the videos.

"The rain can be wonderfully invigorating."

Embed:

> Рамзан Кадыров призвал «прогуляться на свежем воздухе» тех, кто поверил фейкам о его тяжелой болезни
>
> «Советую всем, кто в интернете не может отличить правду от лжи… привести мысли в порядок… Дождь прекрасно бодрит», — отметил глава Чечни. pic.twitter.com/hDjAENHGXw
>
> — Газета.Ru (@GazetaRu) September 17, 2023

It was not possible to immediately establish when the videos were recorded but the footage was published following unconfirmed reports on social media that the Chechen leader was in a coma.

Kadyrov has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine and his battalions have fought alongside regular Russian forces there.

The former rebel warlord turned Kremlin ally has long referred to himself as Vladimir Putin's "footsoldier."

Elected president of Chechnya in 2007, Kadyrov has ruled majority-Muslim Chechnya with widespread evidence of extra-judicial killings and torture of his opponents.

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