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Chechnya's Kadyrov Slams Russian Police Chief, Top Investigator

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Head of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov and Head of the Investigative Committee and the Interior Ministry Alexander Bastrykin. **trkvainah.tv**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov criticized Russia's top investigator and police chief for fueling anti-immigrant sentiment and tensions with neighboring countries during his annual call-in show Wednesday.

The outspoken regional leader pilloried Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev and Alexander Bastrykin, chairman of the Investigative Committee which probes crimes, after being asked about an ethnic Chechen teen facing trial in Moscow over a street fight.

Kadyrov pledged to secure the teen's release and also claimed his detention was part of a broader pattern of treatment of ethnic minorities and migrants from former Soviet republics.

"Kolokoltsev gave the command and now the newcomers are being beaten, detained and kicked out. And then they say no one wants to be friends with us. Why did we lose Ukraine, Georgia? Why are [Russia's] relations with other states strained?" Kadyrov said.

Kadyrov, who rules the Muslim-majority North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, previously spoke out against Russia's tightening migration laws in October. His criticism followed sweeping police raids and deportations of migrants after the deadly Crocus City Hall concert venue attack in March, which citizens of Tajikistan allegedly carried out.

In June, Bastrykin called for tighter laws to limit migration into Russia.

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"Bastrykin and Kolokoltsev are not in their places," Kadyrov said Wednesday, accusing them of "not carrying out the tasks set by the president" and "sitting in their offices and waiting for instructions."

"They don't know what's happening in the country because they don't travel to the regions and don't talk to the people," he added.

"The almighty will punish them."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Thursday declined to comment on Kadyrov's criticism, saying, "If someone considers it necessary to give an assessment, they will give an assessment."

On Thursday, the Investigative Committee said in an evident response to Kadyrov that it had collected video evidence and testimonies from victims and witnesses of the street fights as part of its probe into hooliganism.

Video shared by the law enforcement agency showed one of the fights' participants, whom Kadyrov promised he would help release, being addressed by the name "Muslim."

The Investigative Committee said it suspects five teenagers of provoking strangers, including seven minors and one adult, into fights outside malls and parks in September 2023.

"The final decision on the defendants' guilt will be rendered by the court," it said without specifying that the statement was issued in response to Kadyrov's criticism.

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