

Chechen Official Decries ‘Prejudiced’ Telegram Ban in North Caucasus Regions

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Yelena Afonina / TASS

A minister in Russia’s republic of Chechnya on Monday [slammed](#) a federal government decision to block the Telegram messaging app in the region over security concerns, calling the move “irrational” and “prejudiced.”

The criticism from Akhmed Dудayev, Chechnya’s information and national policy minister, followed an [announcement](#) from officials in neighboring Dagestan that Telegram had been banned in both regions over fears it could be used by “enemies.”

“The decision to block Telegram in two North Caucasus Federal District regions — Chechnya and Dagestan — was made at the federal level on the recommendation of law enforcement agencies,” Dagestan’s Digital Development Minister Yury Gamzatov [told](#) reporters on Saturday.

“It’s often used by enemies,” Gamzatov said, pointing to riots at Makhachkala International Airport on Oct. 29, 2023.

That night, a mob of 1,200 people stormed the airport after rumors [spread](#) on local Telegram channels that a flight from Tel Aviv was carrying Jewish passengers. The riot erupted amid anger over Israel’s war on Gaza.

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Dudayev, a close ally of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, called on federal authorities to lift what he described as the “absolutely unreasonable and irrational” ban.

“If this is not prejudice, what’s the reason for choosing the republic of Chechnya? How does the situation here differ from other Russian regions?” he said.

“We urge you to reconsider this decision, given that its residents have the same right to receive and disseminate information as other citizens of our country,” Dudayev wrote on Telegram.

Telegram, launched in 2013 by Russian-born tech entrepreneur Pavel Durov and his brother, has billed itself as a champion of anti-censorship, user privacy and individual freedoms.

A Moscow court ordered a ban on Telegram in 2018, but the effort was later abandoned.

Durov was detained in France last summer on allegations of failing to curb extremist and illegal content on the platform. He was later granted conditional release after posting bail.

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