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Kadyrov Says He Wants to Step Down as Chechen Leader

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Ramzan Kadyrov. **kremlin.ru**

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov said he is once again asking to be relieved of his post, fueling speculation over the future of his nearly two-decade rule over the Muslim-majority North Caucasus region.

"I heard these rumors, too. They write all kinds of things," Kadyrov told the regional outlet Chechnya Today when asked about recent reports in the media that he may soon resign.

"On the contrary, I myself am asking to be relieved of my post. Let my replacement bring their own ideas and vision. I hope my request is fulfilled," he said in the interview, which was published on Monday.

It remained unclear whether the 48-year-old was speaking in earnest. Kadyrov has made similar remarks about stepping down several times over the past decade, sometimes amid reports of his deteriorating health.

On Tuesday, he appeared to walk back the most recent suggestion that could step down.

“No matter how much I ask, only our Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, decides,” Kadyrov wrote on Telegram. “I’m a foot soldier! I’m a team player. If I’m ordered, I’ll follow.”

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Some experts believe Kadyrov’s resignation talk is more likely aimed at securing certain guarantees or greater budgetary support from the central government in Moscow than signaling a genuine desire to leave office, at least for now.

“He doesn’t just use it as a negotiating tool with Moscow, but also because he always receives a lot of media attention for claiming he’ll retire,” Harold Chambers, a researcher on the Caucasus, told The Moscow Times.

“There’s been an increased discussion of his health over the past couple of weeks, so that is the most apparent context. There are also questions about tensions between him and Moscow after news broke of his ‘lifeline’ conversations with Middle Eastern countries,” he added.

In March, the investigative news outlet IStories reported that Kadyrov has quietly sought assurances from Middle Eastern officials to safeguard his family and assets should his rule over Chechnya end, which has allegedly strained his relations with the Kremlin.

“If he is trying to get something specifically, we likely won’t know until he has it,” Chambers said.

Kadyrov was appointed by Putin in 2007 following the assassination of his father and predecessor, Akhmat Kadyrov. He initially fought against Russian forces in the first Chechen war before switching sides in the second and rising through Moscow’s ranks.

The Chechen leader’s recent political maneuvering, including removing his daughter Aishat as Chechnya’s deputy prime minister and transferring business assets to family members, has further fueled speculation that he may be preparing to step down as ruler of the North Caucasus region.

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