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Chechen Court Declares Separatist Group in Exile 'Terrorist' Organization

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Akhmed Zakayev (second from left). **Jelger Groeneveld / flickr (CC BY 2.0)**

A court in the republic of Chechnya has designated an exiled political group representing the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria as a "terrorist" organization, Russia's FSB security service said Tuesday.

The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria is an unrecognized separatist state that existed de facto between 1991 and 2000 during the first and second Chechen wars.

After Russian forces reasserted control over Chechnya in the early 2000s, its leadership and supporters largely went into exile.

In a statement, the FSB said the movement traces its origins to 1991 and has been led by Akhmed Zakayev, a prominent separatist figure in exile, since 2007.

Russian law enforcement has long sought the arrest of Zakayev on terrorism and murder charges. He has lived in the United Kingdom since 2002, where he was granted political

asylum.

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Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, members of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria have fought alongside Ukrainian troops and taken part in attacks against Russian territories, according to the FSB.

The "terrorist" designation was issued by the Sheikh-Mansur District Court in Grozny, Chechnya's regional capital. Russian media reported that the ruling was handed down on March 12.

The court also designated 29 alleged "branches" of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria operating across 14 unspecified European countries as terrorist organizations.

Anyone found to be involved in the group's activities or to have provided assistance could face life imprisonment under Russian law, the FSB said.

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