



ILYA YASHIN

# A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

AN INDEPENDENT EXPERT REPORT



Ilya Yashin, the author of “Threat to National Security,” says the goal of his report about the Chechen President is “to open Russian society’s eyes to the fact that Ramzan Kadyrov, with the connivance of the country’s authorities and secret services, has become a figure that poses a threat to Russia’s national security.” His report tells about the regime established by Ramzan Kadyrov in Chechnya, reveals his crimes and corrupt schemes and shows how he impacts the current Russian political system.

We believe that Ramzan Kadyrov is not only Russia’s internal threat – he has definitely become a global danger. Kadyrov is known not only by his public intimidation of Russian pro-democracy opposition leaders, human rights activists and journalists, he’s also known for his countless violations of freedoms and human rights in his republic. There are not only suspicions, but also clear traces, of his involvement in the assassinations of Anna Politkovskaya, Natalia Estemirova and Boris Nemtsov. There are also known cases when Kadyrov’s opponents were murdered not only outside Chechnya, but also outside of Russia. One of his archenemies, Sulim Yamadaev, was killed in the UAE. His former bodyguard Umar Israilov, who publically spoke about Kadyrov’s numerous crimes, was shot dead in Austria. Law-enforcement structures of those countries were not able to interrogate the President of Chechnya.

One year after the assassination of Boris Nemtsov, Ramzan Kadyrov enumerates his new enemies in his Instagram and in Chechen official media outlets. He calls Russian oppositionists as “leash-dogs of the U.S.” Today Kadyrov is posting photos on social media photos of former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov and Vladimir Kara-Murza, leaders of Parnas political party, through a sniper rifle lens. It’s not too far of a stretch to believe he will soon declare some world leaders are his enemy and he’ll start chasing them.

Besides, it’s very important to note that Kadyrov keeps over a million Chechens who live abroad and are citizens of other countries as his hostages. They can’t openly criticize Kadyrov as they still have close relatives in the Republic of Chechnya. Chechnya’s leadership put enormous pressure on these people – including abduction and torture. Because of Chechen control over its former citizens, the leadership of their new countries can’t protect those who have fled to the U.S. and Europe and they can’t provide them with a basic freedom common in the West – freedom of speech.

Kadyrov has puzzling control of Putin and the leadership of the Russian government. He flaunts his power in very public and embarrassing ways and he seems to be becoming more brazen on a near daily basis. Kadyrov is the creation of the Putin regime and is our common problem at a global level. The very least the West can do to protect itself is to put Ramzan Kadyrov and his accomplices on the Magnitsky List for gross violation of human rights, add Kremlin’s propagandists there for creating the atmosphere of hatred and start an independent international investigation of Boris Nemtsov’s murder. People like Kadyrov revel in the impunity. If there is no political will in the Kremlin to rein him, there should be international procedures to stop this ungovernable criminal.



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“A Threat to National Security”,  
An Independent Expert Report

Published in Moscow, February, 2016

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An electronic version of this report  
is available at: [www.putin-itogi.ru](http://www.putin-itogi.ru)

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Cover photo:  
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Photo: Dmitry Azarov/Kommersant

Today, the whole world is worried about the threat posed by the ISIS terrorist organization.<sup>1</sup> Radical Muslims have essentially declared war both on Russia and on modern civilization as a whole. Thousands of innocent people have already fallen victim to this war.

World leaders declare their readiness to stand up to ISIS as armies and security forces engage in the battle: on Russian President Vladimir Putin's orders, the Russian air force has been carrying out bombing raids against ISIS sites in Syria since the fall of 2015.

However, few people seem to have noticed that in recent years our own local Islamic state has formed on Russian territory. This isolated "Chechen caliphate" functions according to its own traditions and laws while regularly receiving multi-billion ruble subsidies from the Russian federal budget. Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov lives in the lap of luxury while privileging Sharia law over Russian legislation and building up his military might. Militants from Chechnya carry out terrorist attacks against Kadyrov's opponents both in Moscow and outside Russia.

With each passing year, Kadyrov grows more confident of his invulnerability while his attitude towards the federal government becomes increasingly arrogant. Kadyrov knows that he enjoys the support of the powerful Chechen army, a fighting force that has sworn personal loyalty to him. Most importantly, he knows that he has the loyalty of President Putin. Neither the security forces nor the Russian government can force Kadyrov to comply with Russian laws or bring Chechnya back inside the framework of Russia's sovereign rule.

The future prospects for the relationship between Chechnya and the Russian federal government are a cause for serious concern. Kadyrov's regime has accumulated sufficient resources to enable it to raise the issue of secession from Russia in the event of political instability in Russia itself. It cannot be ruled out that while he is at it, Kadyrov could potentially also seize portions of neighboring territory.

In essence, the result of Putin's policy in the North Caucasus has been the emergence of a state entity in southern Russia that poses a real threat of a new large-scale war. A dangerous regime has formed in Chechnya, and its loyalty depends entirely on the Russian federal government satisfying Ramzan Kadyrov's financial and political appetites.

No single politician or government agency can guarantee today that the Islamic state which Kadyrov has created in Chechnya, and which is currently reveling in a climate of permissiveness, will not be transformed over time into another ISIS prepared to declare jihad against Russia, just as Ramzan Kadyrov's father did in the past. The present report provides an analysis of the gradual process of formation of a dangerous criminal organization in Russian territory that has substituted itself for the Chechen state. This is the story of how Ramzan Kadyrov has become a key and potentially uncontrollable figure in Russian politics: along the way, he has copied Vladimir Putin's political style, tailoring it to his own ethnic and religious specificities.

The goal of this report is to open the eyes of Russian society to the fact that Ramzan Kadyrov now poses a real threat to Russia's national security. And he has reached this status with the connivance of the Russian authorities and intelligence services.

<sup>1</sup> ISIS, the "Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham," is a terrorist organization that is outlawed in Russia and in many other countries.



# CHAPTER 1

## RAGS TO RICHES



RAMZAN KADYROV WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 5, 1976, IN THE VILLAGE OF TSENTAROI IN THE CHECHEN-INGUSH AUTONOMOUS SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC. HE WAS THE SECOND SON OF AKHMAD KADYROV, WHO WOULD LATER BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE POST-SOVIET CHECHEN REPUBLIC. RAMZAN KADYROV GRADUATED FROM SCHOOL IN 1992 BUT COULD NOT CONTINUE HIS STUDIES AT THE TIME, SINCE, AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION, CHECHNYA WAS DRAWN INTO A CONFLICT WITH RUSSIAN FEDERAL AUTHORITIES. IN 1992, THE CHECHEN REPUBLIC ADOPTED A CONSTITUTION IN WHICH IT PROCLAIMED ITSELF TO BE AN INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGN STATE.

### ETHNIC CLEANSING

This period in Chechnya's history is characterized by a sharp rise in crime. Moreover, the new Chechen authorities began implementing a policy directed at driving out representatives of other ethnic groups: this policy was accompanied by murders, robberies and ethnic cleansing. The late journalist Paul Klebnikov described these events as 'a genocide of Russians in Chechnya' even before the beginning of military operations in 1994. "This was a bloody war against the civilian ethnic Russian population of Chechnya, a so-called 'forced Chechenization'" wrote Klebnikov.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin described these events as "a large-scale genocide against the ethnic Russian population."<sup>3</sup> These events were the result both of the weakening of the central authorities and of the population's demand for the restoration of justice after Stalin's deportation of the Chechen people. Chechnya's new authorities successfully capitalized upon these sentiments.

In July 1999, the Russian Ministry for Nationality Affairs reported that from 1991 to 1999, more than 21,000 ethnic Russians had been killed in Chechnya, not counting those who died during military operations, and that more than 100,000 apartments and houses belonging to representatives of non-Chechen ethnic groups had been seized. With the connivance of both federal and local authorities, more than 46,000 people were essentially enslaved when they were deprived of their passports and property.<sup>4,5</sup>

It was at that time that the until then unknown figure Ramzan Kadyrov first rose to prominence. "We make no secret of the fact that we fought against Russia. I, too, fought in the First Chechen War - everyone knows that. I was not even 17 when I first held a machine gun in my hands," he admitted.<sup>6</sup> According to journalist Yulia Latynina, on one occasion, when Ramzan Kadyrov was in the office of the presidential envoy to the Southern Federal District, he uttered the notorious statement: "I killed my first Russian when I was sixteen years old."<sup>7</sup> It is easy to calculate that Kadyrov turned sixteen in 1992, that is, two years before Russian troops entered Chechen territory. Based on the above, Kadyrov began killing even before the First Chechen War, and he did not use weapons only against soldiers.





RAMZAN KADYROV WITH SHAMIL BASAYEV  
AND OTHER TERRORISTS. 1996

## THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR

On December 11, 1994, Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a decree on the entry of Russian troops into Chechnya to restore constitutional order. This was the beginning of the first war between armed Chechen separatists and Russian security forces.

In August 1995, during a meeting of field commanders in Vedeno, Chechen leader Dzhokhar Dudayev appointed Akhmad Kadyrov as the republic's Chief Mufti. His candidacy had been put forward by Shamil Basayev and Ruslan Gelayev<sup>8</sup>, a pair who later became notorious throughout Russia for their terrorist activity. At the time, Akhmad Kadyrov was a close ally of Shamil Basayev. The two men often issued joint statements. Thus, in 1996, the NTV television channel showed a video in

which Basayev, sitting next to Kadyrov, declares: "We will continue to fight! If we can, we will seize Vladivostok, we will seize Khabarovsk, we will seize Moscow! We will fight to the end, and no one except Allah can stop us."<sup>9</sup>

In 1995, Akhmad Kadyrov declared a holy war or jihad against Russia, and in essence called on all Muslims to kill the infidels. At the time, the elder Kadyrov said: "There are one million Chechens and 150 million Russians. If each Chechen kills 150 Russians, we will win."<sup>10</sup> However, a few years later, Kadyrov clarified his previous statement: "No, in 1995 and 1996, I...called on Chechens to kill as many [Russians] as they could. I never said 100, 150 or 200...I said to kill as many as you can. It is no secret that I called for a jihad at the time. But I did not say 150."<sup>11</sup>

In 2000, Vladimir Putin publicly stated that, "During the First Chechen War, Mufti Kadyrov waged armed warfare against Russia."<sup>12</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov was not widely known during the First Chechen War. In her last interview before her assassination, the journalist Anna Politkovskaya noted that at the time the younger Kadyrov "had the reputation of a boy who stands in the corner while the adults talk and is only allowed to approach them to pour tea." Politkovskaya described Ramzan Kadyrov's "past achievements" as "shooting, killing and kidnapping."<sup>13</sup> Two days after this interview, she was shot dead in the entrance to her apartment building in Moscow.

In 2013, the Rossiya TV channel broadcast a documentary entitled "Kadyrov's Heart." The correspondent asked the Chechen leader point blank if he regretted siding with the separatists during the First Chechen War. "No, I am not sorry to have been on that side. If I had not been there, I would not have learned the truth. It was a big learning experience for me," Kadyrov declared.<sup>14</sup>

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IN A BROADCAST ON NTV, SHAMIL BASAYEV, SEATED NEXT TO AKHMAKADYROV, THREATENS TO SEIZE RUSSIAN CITIES. 1996

Photo: AFP Photo, EPA



VLADIMIR PUTIN AND AKHMAKADYROV

## SWITCHING SIDES TO JOIN FEDERAL FORCES

After the signing of the 1996 Khasavyurt Accords between the leaders of the Chechen separatists and official Kremlin representatives, Russia withdrew all of its troops from the territory of Chechnya and de facto recognized its independence.

Soon after that, the situation in Chechnya deteriorated. On one side of the conflict were the allies of Shamil Basayev, who was supporting the establishment of an Islamic state that would include Chechnya and neighboring Ingushetia. Their opponents were the supporters of Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov, who insisted on Chechnya's remaining a secular state. The political crisis in Chechnya led to armed conflict and basically resulted in a dual power structure. In this context, in 1999, Mufti Akhmad Kadyrov entered into a conspiracy with a majority of the heads of Maskhadov's security forces in an attempt to seize power in Chechnya. He opposed both Maskhadov and Basayev's «Wahhabis» at the same time.

The Second Chechen War began in August 1999. After Basayev's militants invaded Dagestan, the Russian army launched an operation directed at destroying militants in Dagestan and restoring the sovereignty of the Russian Federation over Chechen territory.

Akhmad Kadyrov became the Kremlin's main ally in that confrontation. In 2000, the newly elected president

of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, appointed Akhmad Kadyrov as head of the Chechen administration. Considering Kadyrov's biography, Putin noted that this appointment was a personal and «difficult» decision that was «received with varying reactions in Russia.»<sup>15</sup>

**"I CALLED ON CHECHENS  
TO KILL AS MANY [RUSS-  
SIANS] AS THEY COULD.  
IT IS NO SECRET THAT I  
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THE TIME."**



AKHMAKADYROV

Ramzan Kadyrov joined his father in switching over to the side of the federal forces and was accepted into the Chechen structure of the Interior Ministry of the Russian Federation. In the rank of senior police lieutenant, Kadyrov officially commanded a platoon of the Interior Ministry's patrol-sentry service, but was in fact made head of his father's security service, in which approximately 1,000 combatants were placed under his command.



RAMZAN KADYROV. FRAME FROM THE VIDEO  
“THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET UNDERSTOOD WILL SOON UNDERSTAND.”



Most officers in the Chechen presidential security service were former rebels, who had fought against the Russian army but were later granted amnesty as a result of negotiations with Ramzan Kadyrov. Former rebels and terrorists who joined Kadyrov's personal paramilitary force received weapons, service pay and legal status. In return, they pledged their personal loyalty to the junior Kadyrov, who thus began forming his personal guard corps.

It is worth mentioning that Ramzan Kadyrov has a short fuse for amnestied rebels who have betrayed his trust. For instance, after being released under amnesty, former separatist fighter Umar Israilov worked as Kadyrov's bodyguard before fleeing to Europe where he discussed the crimes of his former boss. Israilov revealed cases of abductions and torture that had taken place between 2003 and 2005. According to the fugitive, sometimes, after lunch, Kadyrov would go to a secret prison where «for dessert» he personally tortured people who were suspected of involvement in armed underground resistance.<sup>16</sup> In 2006, Israilov received political asylum in Austria. According to Israilov, Chechen security forces detained and tortured his father in order to make him return to Grozny. In 2009, Israilov was shot dead in Vienna as he was leaving a grocery store.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, three Chechens were arrested and convicted for Israilov's murder: Ramzan Edilov, Suleiman Dadayev and Turpal-Ali Yeshevkayev. According to Austrian investigators, the motive for the killing was revenge against Israilov for revealing the crimes committed by Kadyrov: the investigators believed that Kadyrov ordered the assassination. Among the evidence were pictures from Edilov's cellphone that showed him with Kadyrov. The pictures clearly showed that the two men were friends. However, Austrian investigators could not complete their probe, since Russian prosecutors left all the requests from their European colleagues without answer, and Kadyrov himself ignored the subpoena.<sup>18</sup>

UMAR ISRAILOV,  
KADYROV'S FORMER BODYGUARD,  
WHO WAS SHOT DEAD IN VIENNA



## THE ASSASSINATION OF AKHMAD KADYROV

Despite its growing numbers, the Chechen presidential security service was not up to the task. On May 9, 2004, a terrorist attack at Dynamo stadium in Grozny left 56 injured and seven dead, including Chechnya's President Akhmad Kadyrov.

Ramzan Kadyrov, who was responsible for guaranteeing his father's safety, was not in Grozny at the time. On the day of the tragedy, he met with the Russian president in the Kremlin, where Vladimir Putin expressed his condolences to the junior Kadyrov. It is worth noting that Ramzan Kadyrov came to this meeting with the head of state dressed in a tracksuit.

At his father's funeral, Kadyrov made a slip of the tongue when he promised to continue the work of his father, who “did so much to establish Sharia law in Chechnya.”<sup>19</sup> This slip of the tongue was in many ways prophetic.

On January 29, 2008, Ramzan Kadyrov declared that all those involved in his father's murder had been eliminated. “The person who took responsibility for the murder has been eliminated; those who were involved indirectly have been eliminated as well, and what the Prosecutor's Office is doing is of no importance,” he said in an interview with Ekho Moskvyy radio.<sup>20</sup> Ramzan Kadyrov neither mentioned any names nor supplied any proof of the guilt of those who he claimed to be responsible for his father's death.

The Russian authorities' investigation of this terrorist attack failed to bring to justice either the perpetrators of the crime or those who ordered it. No names have ever been mentioned.

## THE POWER STRUGGLE IN CHECHNYA

After his father's murder, Ramzan Kadyrov began a sustained struggle for power in Chechnya. Enjoying as he did an informal relationship with President Vladimir Putin and possessing rather remarkable control over the security forces, he quickly became a key figure in the Republic. As noted by Carnegie Center expert Alexei Malashenko, before his father's death, the younger Kadyrov had no political background and no special merits in the eyes of the Chechen people. The fact that Ramzan Kadyrov was the son of the assassinated president of Chechnya was the sole reason for his rise to power.<sup>21</sup> It is important to remember that other potential candidates for top positions in Chechnya fell victim to the same terrorist attack at the Dynamo stadium in Grozny that killed Akhmad Kadyrov. For example, Khussein Isayev, chairman of the State Council of Chechnya, an educated man and an experienced politician, whom the media repeatedly described as a potential successor to Akhmad Kadyrov, died in the same explosion.<sup>22</sup>

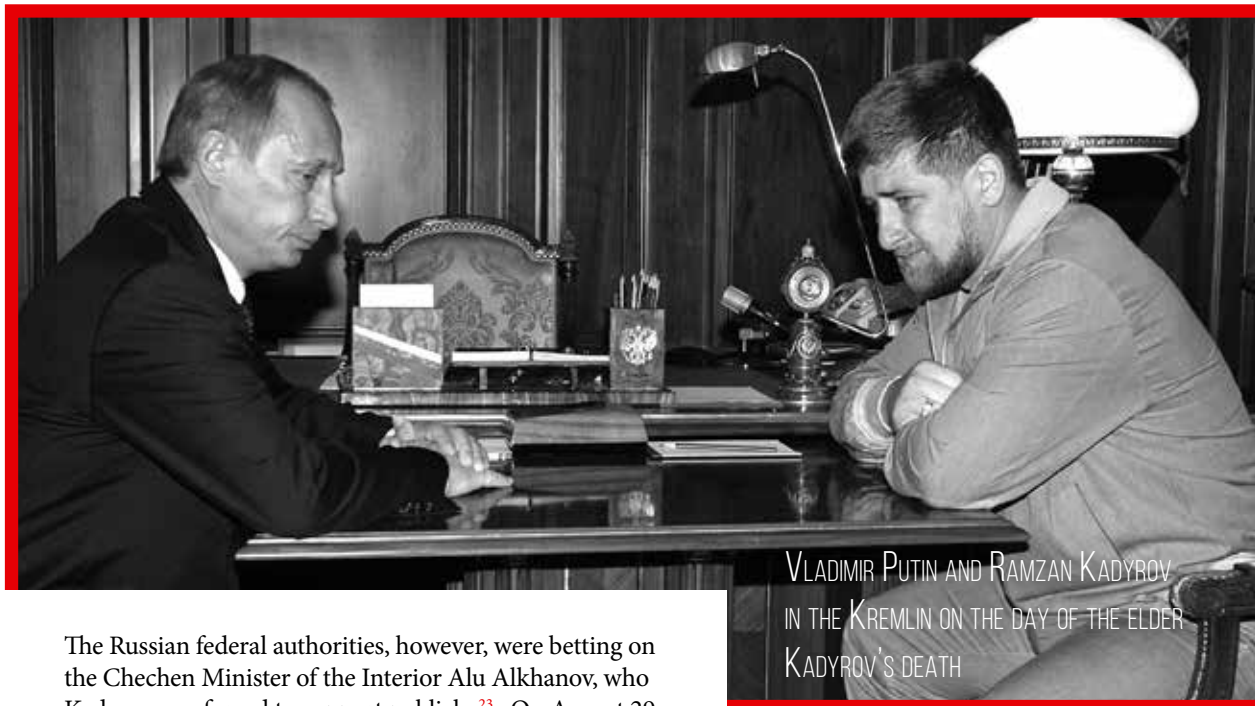
At the time, Ramzan Kadyrov's age was the only legal obstacle that kept him from immediately becoming the new leader of Chechnya. According to the Constitution, Kadyrov was not eligible to run for president until he turned 30. However, Kadyrov was not shy about his political ambitions. Thus, on May 13, 2004, during a joint meeting, the State Council and the government of Chechnya officially addressed a request to President Putin that he support Kadyrov's candidacy to become president of Chechnya and that he «take all measures to remove obstacles preventing his registration.»

### DEATH OF AKHMAD KADYROV



Photo: AP Photo, NEWS.COM





VLADIMIR PUTIN AND RAMZAN KADYROV  
IN THE KREMLIN ON THE DAY OF THE ELDER  
KADYROV'S DEATH

The Russian federal authorities, however, were betting on the Chechen Minister of the Interior Alu Alkhanov, who Kadyrov was forced to support publicly.<sup>23</sup> On August 29, 2004, Alkhanov was officially elected president of the Republic of Chechnya. As a compromise, even before the elections, Alkhanov officially integrated the presidential security service headed by Kadyrov into the structure of the Interior Ministry.<sup>24</sup> A special police regiment was then formed using members of the presidential security service: the result was that «Kadyrov's personal guard corps» was turned into a legal armed unit, essentially allowing amnestied rebels to carry not only firearms but also official identification cards issued by the Ministry of the Interior. From then on, Kadyrov's subordinates were paid directly from the state budget.

After the elections, Muscovite Sergei Abramov, who had been acting president after Akhmad Kadyrov's death, was appointed Prime Minister of Chechnya. However, he did not hold that office for long. On July 13, 2004, Abramov's bodyguard was shot dead in Grozny as a result of an attempt on the life of the Chechen Prime Minister. On November 18, 2005, Abramov himself was severely injured in a car accident in Moscow involving a KamAZ truck that had crashed into his official car. President Alu Alkhanov then signed a presidential decree accepting Sergei Abramov's resignation due to health concerns, and in March 2006 he appointed Ramzan Kadyrov as prime minister of Chechnya.

It appears that after the death of the elder Kadyrov, Putin was trying to establish a system of checks and balances in Chechnya. On one side, there was the ambitious, power-hungry and odious Kadyrov, who had fought against the Russian army in the 1990s; he was opposed on the other side by the experienced law-enforcement officer Alkhanov, who had spent the First Chechen War fighting with the federal forces and was decorated with an Order of Courage medal for having defended Grozny from the separatists. This tandem was supposed to create the necessary balance in Chechnya. However, this plan was obviously destined to fail from the very beginning.

In 2006, after turning 30, Kadyrov was legally able to run for president. Having become prime minister, he entered into an open battle with Alkhanov and publicly criticized the head of the Republic.<sup>25</sup> In effect, a dual-power structure had formed in Chechnya. According to a May 2006 report in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Alu Alkhanov represented constitutional

power in Chechnya, while the real power belonged to Ramzan Kadyrov, who had established control over enormous financial flows from the Russian federal budget.<sup>26</sup>

The conflict between the president and the prime minister of Chechnya soon took on the character of an armed confrontation. Kadyrov was backed by former combatants who had been integrated into the system of the republic's Interior Ministry, while Alkhanov was supported by senior officers of Chechen combat units under the command of Russia's federal security forces, such as Sulim Yamadayev, the head of the «East» battalion of the 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment of the 42nd Guard Motorized Rifle Division of the Chief Intelligence Directorate (GRU); Movladi Baisarov, commander of the «Gorets» («Mountaineer») special division, subordinate to the tactical department of the North Caucasus Directorate of the Federal Security Service (FSB); and Said-Magomed Kakiyev, commander of the GRU-controlled «West» battalion.

In mid-April 2006, a conflict broke out between riot police (OMON) officers loyal to Alkhanov and the «Kadyrovites», as a result of which the former were disarmed and taken to police headquarters. After this incident, Kadyrov ordered his loyal security forces to shoot to kill in similar situations. Later, Kadyrov called Alkhanov to warn him against «bothering his guys because they are combatants, and they miss war, and if they are further provoked, they will definitely start one.»<sup>27</sup>

On April 25th, a shooting match took place in downtown Grozny between the security detail of the Chechen president and that of the Chechen prime minister. The day before, Alu Alkhanov had forbidden any armed individuals from entering the building that housed the government. The «Kadyrovites» tried to enter the grounds of the government complex but were stopped by officers from Alkhanov's security service. As a result of the shooting that ensued, one of the president's bodyguards was injured. According to the media, Kadyrov called Alkhanov and demanded that the «building be abandoned within thirty minutes.» Federal security force units were dispatched to downtown Grozny to defend the government building. This armed confrontation lasted for several hours.<sup>28</sup>

Photo: EPA, AP Photo, AFP Photo

Kadyrov increased the pressure on Alkhanov. After the shooting, a group of Chechen officials who were loyal to Kadyrov and were led by Finance Minister Eli Isayev approached President Alkhanov to demand his resignation.<sup>29</sup> Vladimir Putin had to personally intervene to prevent any further escalation of armed conflict. On May 5th, Putin met with both Alkhanov and Kadyrov at the Kremlin. However, Putin failed to settle the differences between Chechnya's president and its prime minister. The political crisis in the republic deepened further.

Kadyrov then began persecuting security forces loyal to Alkhanov. For instance, he decided to disband the «Gorets» division, and in May 2006 he demanded that it be disarmed. The unit was headed by Movladi Baisarov, the former bodyguard of Kadyrov the elder. Baisarov was known for his sharp criticism of Kadyrov and had blamed him for usurping power. «Kadyrov wants everyone to obey him and to worship him. He is a rich landowner. He is a big boss. Ramzan has an Asian way about him,» Baisarov said in an interview with the newspaper *Moskovskiy Novosti* in October 2006.<sup>30</sup> On November 18th of the same year, Movladi Baisarov was shot dead in Moscow by Chechen Special Forces controlled by Kadyrov.<sup>31</sup> Baisarov received eleven bullet wounds. The Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation refused to initiate a criminal case in connection with this assassination.

In the fall of 2006, Kadyrov declared that Alkhanov's team «should have been dispersed a long time ago.»<sup>32</sup>



COMMANDER OF THE «GORETS» («MOUNTAINEER») SPECIAL DIVISION MOVLADI BAISAROV, WHO WAS SHOT DEAD IN MOSCOW.



By 2007, the Kremlin virtually admitted that the policy of checks and balances in Chechnya had failed. In February, Russian President Vladimir Putin accepted Alu Alkhanov's resignation and virtually handed all powers of government in Chechnya over to Ramzan Kadyrov by appointing him as acting president. On March 2nd, Kadyrov officially became head of the Chechen Republic.





# CHAPTER 2

## THE CHECHEN KHANATE

SOON AFTER HIS APPOINTMENT AS HEAD OF CHECHNYA, RAMZAN KADYROV TOOK HOLD OF ALL THE MECHANISMS NECESSARY FOR GOVERNING THE REGION. AS PRO-KREMLIN POLITICAL ANALYST SERGEI MARKOV HAS NOTED, PUTIN AND KADYROV HAD REACHED "A BROAD POLITICAL AGREEMENT" UNDER WHICH ALL POWERS OF GOVERNMENT IN THE REPUBLIC WERE VESTED IN THE NEW CHECHEN LEADER.<sup>33</sup> KADYROV'S PERSONAL LOYALTY AND EXTENSIVE POLITICAL SUPPORT OF THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT HAVE BECOME THE PRICE THE CHECHEN LEADER HAS PAID FOR THIS POWER.

### THE REGIME OF PERSONAL POWER

The political system established by Kadyrov in Chechnya can be described as one of personal power. Ramzan Kadyrov enjoys practically unlimited authority in the Republic of Chechnya. The parliament, the media and the judicial system are all controlled by the Chechen leader. Kadyrov has said that Vladimir Putin is the only factor limiting his personal authority in the Republic. "I am Putin's man. His word is law for me. How can one not worship him? Putin is a gift from God."<sup>34</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov has essentially prohibited activity by members of the political opposition in the territory of Chechnya. "I have said that the word 'opposition' should be forgotten [in Chechnya]".<sup>35</sup> From his point of view, the political opposition is harmful to the state. "We have no opposition, which serves only to undermine [state] authority. I will not allow [political opponents] to play with the people," Kadyrov clarifies.<sup>36</sup> United Russia is the only political party active in Chechnya. Moreover, election monitoring appears to be impossible, as independent observers are concerned about their personal safety.

Due to a total lack of any political alternative, Kadyrov's regime guarantees almost 100 percent of the vote to Vladimir Putin and the United Russia party in elections at all levels of government. "Voter turnout during the elections will be no less than 100 percent and might even be higher," Kadyrov famously said in the run-up to elections in the Republic,<sup>37</sup> and his forecast turned out to be close to reality. Today, 37 of the 41 members of the Chechen Parliament, represent United Russia, the regional branch of which is headed by Kadyrov

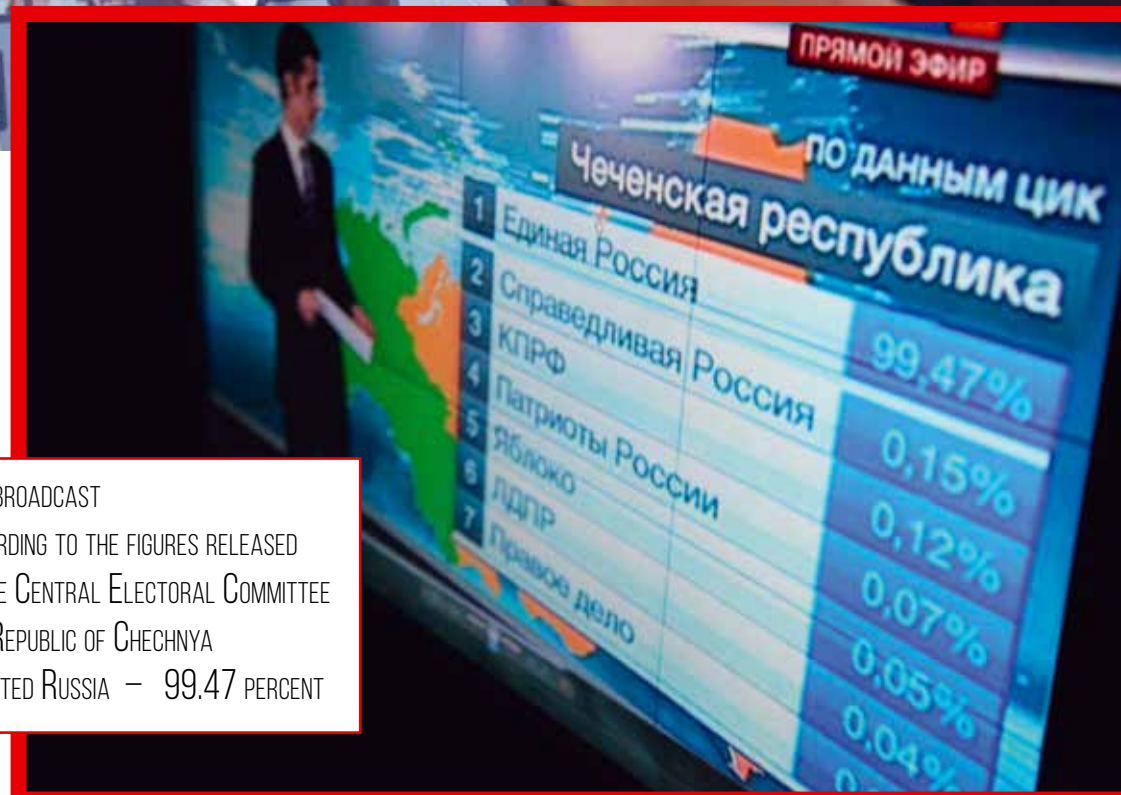
himself. During the 2011 elections to the State Duma, the local electoral commission registered a voter turnout of 99%: United Russia's electoral list with Kadyrov at the top received 99% of the vote. During the 2012 presidential elections, Vladimir Putin received 99.73% of the vote in Chechnya, which reported a voter turnout of 99.59%.<sup>38</sup>

Arkady Lyubarev, an expert from the election-monitoring group GOLOS, has openly labeled the results of the elections in Chechnya as being falsified.<sup>39</sup> Political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin describes Chechnya as having a specific electoral regime, in which "an independent observer risks his own head just by coming to the polling place".<sup>40</sup>

Even the supporters of the current regime are forced to admit that elections in Chechnya are an obvious fraud. According to Vyacheslav Nikonov, a State Duma deputy from the United Russia party, commenting on the results of the 2011 parliamentary elections, "The political system in Chechnya is based on authoritarianism, which makes it able to guarantee proper results. I have not seen similar results since Soviet times."<sup>41</sup>



Photo: Valery Melnikov/Kommersant, A.Astakhova



LIVE BROADCAST  
ACCORDING TO THE FIGURES RELEASED  
BY THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL COMMITTEE  
THE REPUBLIC OF CHECHNYA  
1. UNITED RUSSIA — 99.47 PERCENT



Kadyrov called for the imprisonment of the organizers of the Moscow rallies for fair elections in the run-up to the 2012 presidential elections. “Those who organize protests are the enemies of Russia. If it were up to me, I would throw them all in prison.”<sup>42</sup>



RAMZAN KADYROV

**“I AM PUTIN’S MAN.  
HIS WORD IS LAW  
FOR ME. HOW CAN  
ONE NOT WORSHIP  
HIM? PUTIN IS A GIFT  
FROM GOD.”**

Human rights activists are virtually the only critics of Kadyrov’s regime in Chechnya. However, their activity in the Republic involves enormous personal risk. Human rights activists in Chechnya are systematically subjected to aggression and threats of physical violence, including from Kadyrov himself.

The human rights group Memorial has raised the issue of kidnappings on the territory of Chechnya. According to human rights activists, “structures controlled by Kadyrov” are behind most of the kidnappings in the Republic. In essence, the Chechen authorities are paralyzing society with fear. “The horror-stricken state of Chechnya’s population is staggering. People are afraid to report a missing son to the Prosecutor’s office. They understand the pointlessness of doing so. They understand that they will get nowhere [by going to the authorities], and that the father who was left behind or the other sons in the family might be in danger. People are sometimes released, but why and how are they released? There is a system of paying ransom,” says Tatiana Kasatkina of Memorial.<sup>43</sup>

Human rights activists help the relatives of missing persons to write requests to law-enforcement bodies and to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Lawyers engaged by human rights activists to bring cases to court have already won more than 50 such cases in the ECHR in Strasbourg, which has ordered the Russian state to pay more than €12 million in compensation to the victims.<sup>44</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov does not hide his hostility toward Memorial. “These people are the enemies of Russia,” he declared on the Grozny TV channel in 2010.<sup>45</sup> One year before Kadyrov made that statement, Natalia Estemirova, an activist with Memorial, had been abducted in the Chechen capital. Her body was later found with bullet wounds to the head and chest. According to the head of Memorial, Oleg Orlov, one of Estemirova’s last reports were on kidnappings by “Kadyrovites” in the village of Akhkinchu-Borzoi and on a public shooting of one of those who had been abducted. This report sent Kadyrov into a rage.<sup>46</sup> Orlov has directly accused Ramzan Kadyrov of ordering the assassination of his colleague. “I know who is to blame for Estemirova’s murder. We all know this person. His name is Ramzan Kadyrov. He threatened Natalia, insulted her and considered her to be his personal enemy.”<sup>47</sup>

Human rights activists from the NGO Committee Against Torture have also faced the aggressive reaction of “Kadyrovites”. For instance, they have criticized the Chechen president’s practice of setting fire to the residences of the relatives of those who are suspected of supporting the armed underground resistance movement. After several such acts of arson, the Committee’s head, Igor Kalyapin, demanded that the Prosecutor-General’s Office of the Russian Federation initiate criminal proceedings against Kadyrov for his call to commit extrajudicial killings.<sup>48</sup> Soon after that, Chechen Deputy Interior Minister Apti Alaudinov declared that he could no longer guarantee the safety of human rights activists in Chechnya. On December 13, 2014, the Grozny office of the Committee Against Torture was burned down.<sup>49</sup>

The Committee’s main goal is to investigate the cases of torture of citizens by Chechen law-enforcement officials.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST NATALIA ESTEMIROVA, WHO WAS MURDERED IN CHECHNYA



Photo: ABACA, AFP Photo, EPA

GROZNY AFTER AN ATTACK BY REBELS IN DECEMBER 2014



One such example is the case of Suleiman Edigov, who was tortured with the use of electricity in order to force him to admit to the murder of a police officer. This case attracted wide public attention due to Judge Vakhid Abubakarov’s having disqualified himself from continuing to preside over the court. In his deposition, which received wide attention, the judge wrote that he was being put under pressure: “A man introducing himself as Chechen Interior Minister Lt. Gen. Ruslan Shakhayevich Alkhanov called me, the judge, and said that it was known to him as a fact that the accused Suleiman Edigov was guilty as charged, and he warned me not to pronounce a “not guilty” verdict.”<sup>50</sup>

The NGO Committee Against Torture managed to collect information concerning an illegal prison in Chechnya that was set up by Kadyrov’s schoolmate, Alikhan Tsakayev. “People were kept there for months in order to be able to report on the elimination of rebels on the occasion of yet another holiday. People are detained, then dressed in camouflage and killed in the mountains as “rebels.” The bullet wounds on the camouflage do not always correspond to wounds on the bodies,” Kalyapin says. A criminal investigation that was initiated following a claim by human rights activists is currently underway.<sup>51</sup>

On June 3, 2015, the office of the Committee Against Torture in Grozny, the activists’ apartment and a car belonging to the organization were all vandalized. Masked vandals armed with crowbars came from a rally in downtown Grozny that had been organized by Kadyrov.<sup>52</sup> Police officers who witnessed the incident chose not to intervene. Ramzan Kadyrov blamed the attack on the human rights activists themselves. According to Kadyrov, employees of the Committee “systematically create a nervous atmosphere by trying to instigate mass riots in Grozny.”<sup>53</sup>

After the attack, the Committee Against Torture decided to close down its office in Grozny out of concern for the safety of its employees.<sup>54</sup> “Kadyrov has failed to prove and will never prove that he is a guarantor of justice and peace,” says writer Zakhar Prilepin, a veteran of the two Chechen wars of 1996 and 1999. He described the situation in the republic as “a brutal conflict between Kadyrov’s regime and the Chechen population.”<sup>55</sup>

**“POWER IN CHECHNYA  
IS YET AGAIN SEIZED  
BY LEGALIZED  
REBELS.”**



DMITRY ROGOZIN,  
RUSSIAN DEPUTY  
PRIME MINISTER

“Power in Chechnya has yet again been seized by legalized rebels. The local king of beasts with a cushy job and a Hero of Russia star on his chest blatantly takes credit for the victories of army special forces,” current Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said before his appointment to the government.<sup>56</sup>





## ARMING THE UNDERGROUND

Putin's main objective in vesting all government powers in Kadyrov was the destruction of the underground separatist forces that employed terrorist methods in their struggle for Chechnya's independence. In exchange for exclusive powers and authority, Kadyrov's primary task was to be finding a solution for this exact problem.

Despite the ongoing special operations against the separatists in Chechnya's mountain regions and the legalization of a number of rebels in Kadyrov's structures, the underground radical Islamic forces are still present in Chechen territory. Once in a while, these forces activate and carry out militant raids on Chechen cities and attack police officers. Generally speaking, the situation in Chechnya remains quite tense.

For instance, on December 4, 2014, a group of Islamist rebels attacked Grozny. Militants gunned down a traffic police checkpoint and seized the House of the Press, after which fighting between Islamists and Russian law-enforcement forces continued around the city's Old Market, Mira Street and Public School # 20. Russian army units and heavy vehicles were used to repel the assault. The rebels killed 14 law-enforcement officials and injured another 36. One civilian was also killed.<sup>57</sup>

On June 26, 2015, Islamist militants gunned down policemen in a residential district of Grozny.<sup>58</sup> On July 29, 2015, an armed confrontation involving underground rebels and policemen took place near the villages of Ilaskhan-Yurt and Mayrtup.<sup>59</sup>

The republic's continuing social problems are one of the main reasons why armed underground forces are still present in Chechnya. For example, despite the enormous federal grants allocated to Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov's government has failed to solve the problem of mass unemployment. Chechen authorities report that in 2015, the steadily declining unemployment rate dropped to 13.9 percent<sup>60</sup>. However, such official reports have nothing in common with the real picture. Substandard living conditions in a context of growing Islamist tendencies have created an ideal atmosphere for radical Muslim organizations wishing to recruit young Chechens.

## KADYROV AND ISLAM

The ostentatious Islamization of Chechnya is an important feature of Ramzan Kadyrov's policies. On the face of it, Chechnya appears to be a religious state based on medieval Asian traditions. In 2010, Kadyrov publicly stated that "Sharia law is above Russian laws" and "The enemies of Islam must be destroyed."<sup>61</sup> However, the religious character of Kadyrov's regime is to a considerable degree simply a tool for political influence. For example, Alexei Malashenko, the Moscow Carnegie Center expert, believes that "religion, with the help of mosques, principally allows Kadyrov to control the population."<sup>62</sup>

For instance, in accordance with conservative Islamic traditions, it is practically impossible to meet unveiled women in the territory of modern Chechnya. These regulations have been forced upon the population. Kadyrov has publicly supported paintball attacks against any women found to be walking in the streets of Grozny without head covering.<sup>63</sup>

"A vice squad keeps watch by our college entrance. These people visually estimate skirt lengths and how scarves

are tied around students' heads. They have even laid their hands on young women a few times. But who would ever report them, and to whom, when everyone knows that they have been granted authority from above?" comments Luiza, a teacher from Grozny.<sup>64</sup> "If Kadyrov drives in a motorcade and sees a girl on the side of the road wearing a short skirt, he can roll down the car window and yell at her right from the car," says Madina, a resident of Grozny.<sup>65</sup>

Polygamy, which is considered a norm in the traditions of Islam, has virtually been legalized in Chechnya, in violation of Russian law. "There are 25 million Muslims in Russia, and polygamy should be allowed in such regions as Chechnya. Those who consider us barbarians for this reason are clearly barbarians themselves since this is a normal, pure and proper attitude toward women," Kadyrov stated.<sup>66</sup>

In the spring of 2015, the marriage in Chechnya between 47-year-old Nazhud Guchigov, the Nozhai-Yurt district police chief, and 17-year-old Luiza Goylabiyeva, caused a big stir. According to the journalist Yelena Milashina, the teenager was forced to wed the man: Goylabiyeva's family had been put under pressure. Furthermore, during his conversation with Milashina, Guchigov admitted that he had another wife, which means that this new marriage was in violation of the laws of the Russian Federation. Ramzan Kadyrov, however, declared that he had personally allowed Guchigov to marry the 17-year-old girl.<sup>67</sup>

In November 2015, on Kadyrov's orders, Chechen Interior Minister Alkhanov instructed his employees to organize official prayers for law-enforcement officials, and to give weekly reports to the Interior Ministry headquarters about the number of prayers recited. The author of this report has seen a copy of the telegram signed by Interior Minister Alkhanov.

The Islamization of Chechnya also affects medical care in the territory of the Republic. In 2009, Ramzan Kadyrov opened a Center for Islamic Medicine in Grozny that specializes in performing "djinn" exorcisms.<sup>68</sup> According to Kadyrov, the center treats approximately 60,000 "patients" annually, whom it helps to rid of ailments using "nontraditional methods, by reading the Holy Qur'an."<sup>69</sup>

An important symbol of the radical Islamization of Chechnya under Ramzan Kadyrov was the virtual official self-identification with the terrorists responsible for the Charlie Hebdo shooting in Paris. On January 7, 2015, radical Islamists attacked the offices of the satirical French newspaper, killing 12 people in revenge for publishing cartoons of Prophet Muhammad. Commenting on the terrorist attack, Kadyrov said, "I consider all those who support the right of Charlie Hebdo and other publications to insult the religious feelings of Muslims to be my personal enemies."<sup>70</sup> Ten days later, he organized a protest rally in Chechnya against the publication of Muhammad caricatures. The rally was attended by thousands of people. In effect, Kadyrov was supporting the terrorists' demands while the rest of the world was mourning the victims of the shooting in France.

However, according to many experts, Chechnya only exhibits outward signs of Islamization, while Kadyrov's regime in many respects actually contradicts Islam.

"The main incongruity is to be found in Kadyrov's cult of personality," says Novaya Gazeta correspondent Yelena Milashina. According to the journalist, Friday prayers in Chechen mosques begin and end with praise for Kadyrov, not for the Prophet. This is a grave violation of Islamic principles.

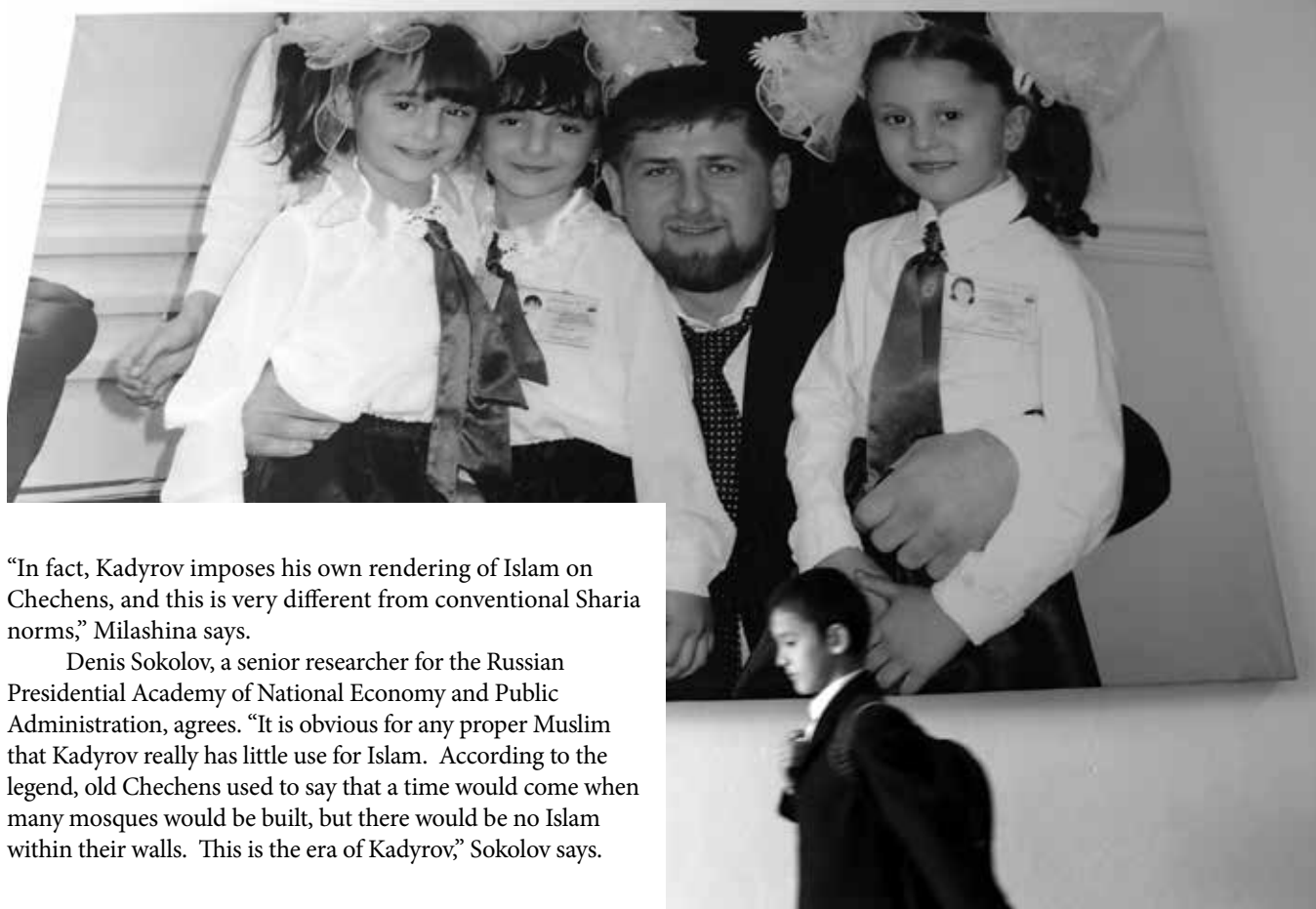


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| Штаб<br>МВД по Чеченской Республике<br><i>Мухомов Д.Д.</i>  | Заместителям Министра, руководителем подразделений МВД по Чеченской Республике, начальникам территориальных органов МВД России по районам (городам) ЧР, отделов полиции УМВД России по г. Грозный, командирам строевых подразделений полиции МВД по ЧР (по списку) |
| Инспектор по ОП ИАО ОАГНК штаба МВД по ЧР Симдянов Д.В.<br>тел. 62-40-17, 32-58   |  |
| ТЕЛЕФОНОГРАММА  |  |
| Дата  | Индекс   |
| Время передачи  |  |
| Во исполнение поручений Главы Чеченской Республики Героя России Р.А. Кадыева –  |  |
| НЕОБХОДИМО:   |  |
| 1. В период с 20 ноября т.г. до наступления Дня рождения Пророка Мухаммеда (с.а.в.) 25-27 декабря т.г. продолжить чтение молитв (Салават).  |  |
| 2. Сведения о количестве прочитанных руководителями и личным составом подчиненных органов и подразделений молитв, нарастающим итогом, сообщать еженедельно по понедельникам и четвергам до 10.00 час. в штаб МВД по Чеченской Республике по телефонам: (8-8712) 22-37-52, 62-40-17 (гор.) и 31-01, 31-12, 31-14, 40-33, 50-59, 32-58 (вп.). |  |
| 3. Итоговое количество прочитанных Салават должно быть не менее 300 тысяч в расчете на одного сотрудника.   |  |
| 4. Определить ответственных сотрудников за направление сведений, их установочные данные и контактные телефоны сообщить в штаб Министерства по вышеуказанным телефонам.  |  |
| 5. Руководителям органов и подразделений выполнение данного поручения взять под личный контроль.  |  |
| <i>*Примечание: в учет прочитанных сотрудниками Салават может засчитываться количество молитв, произнесенных членами их семей.</i>  |  |
| Министр<br>генерал-лейтенант полиции  | <i>[Подпись]</i> Р.И. Алханов  |
| Исх. № 162 от «20» ноября 2015 г.   |  |



Photo: AFP Photo, Sergey Ponomarev





“In fact, Kadyrov imposes his own rendering of Islam on Chechens, and this is very different from conventional Sharia norms,” Milashina says.

Denis Sokolov, a senior researcher for the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, agrees. “It is obvious for any proper Muslim that Kadyrov really has little use for Islam. According to the legend, old Chechens used to say that a time would come when many mosques would be built, but there would be no Islam within their walls. This is the era of Kadyrov,” Sokolov says.

## RAMZAN’S CULT OF PERSONALITY

Since Kadyrov came to power in Chechnya, his cult of personality has been consistently imposed on the population. Even before his appointment to the presidency, the former rebel celebrated his birthday in Grozny as a national holiday. The 30th birthday of then-Prime Minister Kadyrov was commemorated with the opening of the Grozny Airport and a triumphal arch marking the entrance to the capital. All Chechen mosques prayed for the prime minister’s health. The following day, 50,000 people took part in a rally in downtown Grozny. The participants carried portraits of Kadyrov and Putin - their birthdays are just two days apart.

More than 2,000 people attended a reception to celebrate Kadyrov’s 30th birthday. Members of the Chechen KVN (“Club of the Funny and Sharp-Witted”) team that performed at the concert each received a car as a gift. In the evening, Russian pop stars Filipp Kirkorov, Sofia Rotaru, Soso Pavliashvili, Lada Dens, Irakli, and Pierre Narcisse performed for the hero of the day. The celebrations ended with fireworks.

It is worth mentioning that Kadyrov, who headed the Chechen government, received many expensive gifts for his birthday from business representatives. For example, entrepreneurs Umar Dzhabrailov and Ruslan Baisarov gave Kadyrov a Ferrari Testarossa costing \$450,000, with a personalized number plate K-030-PA, which stands for “Kadyrov-30-Ramzan Akhmatovich.”<sup>71</sup> Russian legislation in force at the time banned officials from accepting any gifts, the cost of which exceeded five monthly minimum wages: This means that the cost of a gift could not exceed 5,500 Russian rubles. However, law-enforcement bodies chose to ignore the fact that Ramzan Kadyrov was openly receiving gifts, which the court could have interpreted as a corrupt practice.

Today, one can hardly find a street in all of Chechnya that is not adorned with a portrait of Ramzan Kadyrov.

Pictures of the Chechen president can be seen much more often than any Russian national symbols. “I am young, handsome and likable. So what if I put up pictures? I put them up so that people can look at me,” Kadyrov explained.<sup>72</sup> However, the Chechen leader does not limit himself to photos. Streets have been named after him in a number of towns, including but not limited to Gudermes, Tsotsi-Yurt, Znamenskoye and Tsentaroi. Chechnya is the only Russian region where streets are named after a current leader.

The cult of personality surrounding Kadyrov is also being imposed on the Chechen education system. For instance, in 2011, an essay competition was launched in Chechen universities dedicated to the head of the region and entitled “The Hero of Our Time: Leader and Patriot.” “The writing of essays coincides with yet another of Ramzan Akhmatovich’s inaugurations. He will like it,” explained representatives of the Chechen Republic’s Committee for Youth Affairs.<sup>73</sup>

Activities directed at encouraging Kadyrov’s popularity among children are not new in Chechnya. In 2009, it became known that groups of “young Kadyrovites” were being formed in Chechen elementary school classes. Chechen television featured a report about a whole class from the village of Novogrozny that joined the “rising Kadyrovite generation” movement. Kids solemnly took an oath in front of the cameras promising “always to abide by the Kadyrovites’ laws.”<sup>74</sup>

To commemorate Kadyrov’s birthday in 2014, silver and gold coins depicting the portrait of Kadyrov weighing one kilogram each were minted.<sup>75</sup> “At some point, people lose their sense of reality. This is ostentatious Asian luxury. When everything is allowed, one begins to develop royal attitudes,” commented Dmitri Oreshkin, a member of the Presidential Council for Human Rights, on the release of personalized Kadyrov coins.<sup>76</sup>

Photo: EPA, A. Astakhova, AP Photo, NEWS.COM

## THE HERO AND THE ACADEMIC

Not yet 40 years old, Kadyrov has already assembled quite a collection of medals and awards. For example, he was decorated with the Russian Order of Courage and an Order of Merit to the Motherland. The Chechen leader has been awarded more than 60 official state awards.<sup>77</sup> By comparison, Leonid Brezhnev is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as holding approximately 200 awards and medals. The pace of Kadyrov’s awards so far suggests he may well match the record set by the Soviet leader.

Kadyrov is a winner of numerous awards, including for merit in science and education. He was 28 years old when he graduated from the Makhachkala Institute of Business and Law in 2004. It is worth mentioning that, on the eve of his finals, in his interview with Anna Politkovskaya, he could not remember the topic of his thesis.<sup>78</sup> A questionable education did not prevent Kadyrov from becoming an honorary member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, as well as a professor at the Modern Humanitarian Academy, or from receiving a Ph.D. in economics.

Against the background of fraudulent elections, the assassination of Natalia Estemirova and acts of vandalism against the offices of human rights activists, Kadyrov holds an honorary distinction from the Central Electoral Commission “For Merit in Organizing Elections.” He was also awarded the title of “Honored Defender of Human Rights.”

Kadyrov also holds high distinctions from Russian law-enforcement bodies. For instance, in March 2015, the director of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation presented Kadyrov with a personalized firearm.<sup>79</sup> Even earlier, in 2009, the Russian president awarded him the rank of police general. At the time, experts noted that this award was in violation of Russian law. In fact, in becoming a general, Kadyrov skipped the ranks of major and colonel. The promotion of the Chechen leader to such a high rank was met with a mixed reaction at Interior Ministry headquarters. “We have no 30-year-old generals, and it is absolutely impossible to get promoted to this rank at this age in our system.”<sup>80</sup>

But Kadyrov’s main source of pride is the Hero of Russia Star, the country’s highest distinction, which he received from the hands of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Under the law, the Hero of Russia is the highest distinction awarded for merit to the state and its people, and is associated with the performance of a heroic exploit. The organization of gangs and contract killings is not yet considered an exploit, thus there was no reason to give the honor to Kadyrov. In fact, giving this award to Kadyrov was an insult to both the highest distinction and to all the people who were justly rewarded with it, often at the cost of their lives,” says Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

**“GIVING THE HERO OF RUSSIA STAR TO KADYROV WAS AN INSULT TO ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO WERE JUSTLY REWARDED WITH THIS TITLE, OFTEN AT THE COST OF THEIR LIVES.”**



ALEXEI NAVALNY,  
OPPOSITION POLITICIAN





# CHAPTER 3

## “YOU PROVE

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH MARIANNA MAKSIMOVSKAYA THAT WAS AIRED ON THE REN TV CHANNEL IN 2012, RAMZAN KADYROV DECLARED THAT ALLAH WAS GIVING HIM MONEY. “YOU PROVE THAT IT IS NOT ALLAH!” HE EXCLAIMED, INTERRUPTING THE JOURNALIST’S QUESTION.<sup>81</sup>



### “STOP FEEDING KADYROV”

An analysis of Chechnya’s financial situation, however, shows that the origins of the funds that are flowing into Chechnya are far from divine. During the years of Kadyrov’s reign, allocations from the federal government have accounted for more than 80 percent of Chechnya’s budget.

From 2001 to 2014, more than 464 billion rubles were allocated to Chechnya in the form of grants, subsidies and donations. Since 2004, the gratuitous grants have been amounted to approximately 59 billion rubles per year. In 2007, when President Putin appointed Kadyrov as president of Chechnya, the Republic’s share in the total amount of transfers to Russia’s regions reached its highest point.<sup>82</sup>

It is worth noting that these numbers include neither the federal funds that are being spent in Chechnya directly—for the construction of government buildings, for example—nor the expenses of state-controlled companies that operate in the territory of Chechnya and invest money in the region’s economy.

Those funds that are being allocated to Chechnya for the social support of the population are also worth mentioning. For example, Chechnya is the country’s biggest recipient of federal subsidies for multiple-child families. According to Russia’s Pension Fund, from July 1, 2009, to September 1, 2013, approximately 32 billion rubles were transferred to the republic to cover such payments. The population growth in the region over this period amounted to some 86,000 people. In comparison, the residents of Moscow, where population growth over the same period reached several hundred thousand people, received only 15 billion rubles for multiple-child family subsidies from 2009 to 2013. What is more, only a part of this enormous sum of money ever reaches the residents of Chechnya.

Photo: Valery Melnikov/Kommersant, Sergey Ponomarev

## THAT IT IS NOT ALLAH!”



The share of federal subsidies in the budget of Chechnya



Source: figures released by the Federal Treasury.  
Proportion between non-repayable and irrevocable grants and the budget's total income.



The accumulation of enormous sums in social allocations from the federal budget has become a key source of the illegal acquisition of wealth for Chechnya's top officials.

The funds that the republic receives from Moscow are not being spent parsimoniously. For instance, Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has called Chechnya a champion of extravagance. Siluanov noted that the fleet of office cars of Chechen officials accounts for about half of the office car fleet of the entire North Caucasus. What is more, in Chechnya, civil servants' business expenses are twice as high as anywhere else in Russia.<sup>83</sup>

**“IF YOU GIVE MONEY WITHOUT SUPERVISION TO PEOPLE WITH WEAPONS, THIS IS NOT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE — IT'S A TRIBUTE.”**



MIKHAIL DELYAGIN,  
ECONOMIST

However, Kadyrov himself believes that Chechnya is not receiving enough funding. Thus, in an interview with the “Russian News Service” he declared that “tens of billions of rubles are not being released from the federal budget” for his region. “We are concerned. We have debts. We took loans. We did everything we could,” Kadyrov stated.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, the oversight over funds allocated to Chechnya is treated as a pure formality. Chechnya is at the very top of the list of Russia's most corrupt regions.<sup>85</sup> Even Kremlin officials admit that a considerable part of these funds are being stolen. Thus, in 2010, then-President Dmitri Medvedev said: “Federal funds often do not reach [the] people [for whom they were intended- ed.]. We know where they disappear to. It is obvious that they are being stolen.”<sup>86</sup>

According to the economist Mikhail Delyagin, in 2005, the Chechen government placed unprecedented financial demands before Russia that “looked more like the claims of the Golden Horde on a conquered Rus.”<sup>87</sup> From his point of view, the Russian authorities still prefer “paying money to good Chechens to make bad Chechens jealous.” “But if you give money without supervision to people with weapons, this is called a tribute--not financial assistance,” Delyagin emphasizes.<sup>88</sup>

Kadyrov has repeatedly told journalists that he finds the slogan “Stop feeding the Caucasus” to be very offensive. Despite the enormous amounts of money that are being allocated to Chechnya year after year, this slogan does seem to be incorrect. Social stratification in Chechnya is at 40%, the highest such figure in all of Russia's regions.<sup>89</sup> According to official statistics only, in Chechnya, there are more than 180,000 people living below the poverty line.<sup>90</sup> The same cannot be said of Kadyrov, who enjoys a life of luxury. This is why slogan that Chechnya's president finds so unpleasant should actually be changed to “Stop feeding Kadyrov.”

## THE AKHMAD KADYROV FOUNDATION

In addition to the funds flowing into Chechnya from the federal budget, enormous financial resources are being accumulated through the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation. Technically, the foundation is headed by Ramzan Kadyrov's mother, which allows the head of Chechnya to control the organization.

The principal trait of the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation is its lack of transparency. The most recent information about the Foundation available in open sources dates from 2013. At the time, there were 1.45 billion rubles in the organization's accounts. Open sources, however, offer no information about the origin of these funds.

The Russian Ministry of Justice database contains no reports on the activity of the foundation. In its response to a request made by the Kommersant newspaper in 2015, Ministry of Justice officials said that the foundation publishes reports in the local media.<sup>91</sup> This is, however, a violation of the law. Registered nongovernmental organizations have to report regularly to the Ministry of Justice on the sources of their financing and on their expenses. The Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation is Russia's only nongovernmental organization that disregards this legal provision. What is more, the officials responsible for oversight ignore this violation.

“The Ministry of Justice understands very well that the Kadyrov Foundation essentially serves as [Ramzan Kadyrov's] wallet. In fact, the foundation is above the law,” says Georgy Alburov, an expert at the Anti-Corruption Foundation. “Officials do not want to take risks by looking into Kadyrov's financial affairs,” he adds.

The Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation fulfills two purposes in Chechnya.

First of all, it serves as a means for Ramzan Kadyrov to control the Republic's economic assets. For example, the foundation established the Megastroyinvest company

**“THE [AKHMAD] KADYROV FOUNDATION IS ABOVE THE LAW AND ESSENTIALLY SERVES AS RAMZAN KADYROV'S WALLET.”**



GEORGY ALBUROV,  
AN EXPERT AT THE  
ANTI-CORRUPTION FOUNDATION

to manage the majority of both commercial and publicly-funded construction projects in the region. Through business structures or people close to its founders, the foundation controls all major real estate properties in Chechnya. For example, the foundation has de facto control over the Arena City company that operates a hotel of the same name in Grozny, where show business stars and

Ramzan Kadyrov's guests of honor usually stay. The foundation also owns a 50 percent stake in the company Kolizey, through which Kadyrov controls a major sports complex of the same name in downtown Grozny that is known for expensive mixed martial arts competitions with the participation of international stars. It is through Kolizey and associated companies that the commercial chain loops back to the Kadyrov Foundation.<sup>92</sup> In any case, control over all major real estate properties begins and ends with the foundation itself, or with people close to Ramzan Kadyrov.

Secondly, the Kadyrov Foundation is responsible for large-scale fundraising among the Chechen population: this can be seen as a virtually legalized system of collecting tributes. Officially, this money is used for charity and, according to the Kommersant newspaper, it is collected on a “mandatorily voluntary” basis. According to an investigation conducted by the Open Russia movement, every Chechen is required to pay monthly fees to the Kadyrov Foundation. The amount paid depends on the person's social status. Thus, officials have to pay 10 percent of their monthly wages; employees of private companies give away about a third of their earnings, while businessmen transfer almost half of their revenues to the Foundation. Open Russia experts estimate this “tribute” to be 3 to 4 billion rubles and note that these funds are not taxable and or subject to any control.<sup>93</sup> Yet another scheme for replenishing the Foundation is connected with bonus awards to employees of the public sector that never actually reach them. Although school teachers, pre-school teachers and doctors sign bonus registers, they never actually see that money: in keeping with Chechnya's unspoken rules, this money goes to the Foundation's accounts under the guise of voluntary donations. Chechen businessmen who live in Moscow are also forced to make donations to the Foundation. Chechnya's official representative in the Russian capital is responsible for supervising the collection of these fees.

According to the charter of the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation, the organization's purpose is to implement social projects and provide assistance to people who are experiencing difficulties. In reality, the money is spent on providing a life of luxury for the head of Chechnya and on buying the loyalty of show business stars, whom Ramzan Kadyrov lavishes with money and gifts. Here are a few of the organization's known expenses<sup>94</sup>:

- a watch worth €100,000 that Kadyrov gave to the fashion stylist Sergei Zverev;
- a Porsche Cayenne car worth €250,000 which Kadyrov presented to TV host Yana Rudkovskaya;
- €1 million paid to Diego Maradona for participating in a soccer match with Kadyrov;
- €2 million paid to Mike Tyson for coming to Chechnya for a friendly sparring match with Kadyrov;
- €1 million paid to Hilary Swank for attending Kadyrov's birthday in Grozny.

Despite this lack of transparency, the questionable revenues and the extravagant expenses, Russia's law-enforcement bodies have never carried out an inspection of the Kadyrov Foundation's activity. This strange lack of action can only be explained through political motives. It appears that Kadyrov has been authorized at the Kremlin's highest level to collect and spend money as he deems fit, without regard for the law.



RAMZAN KADYROV WITH MARADONA...



...WITH MIKE TYSON



...WITH JEAN-CLAUDE VAN DAMME



## A LIFE OF LUXURY

According to Ramzan Kadyrov's 2015 income declaration,<sup>95</sup> he earned 4.84 million rubles that year. The declaration also states that he owns a 3,500-square-meter plot of land and a 2,300-square-meter house. The Chechen president's wife, Medni Kadyrova, declared an income of 3.37 million rubles and a 210-square-meter apartment. Kadyrov's family also owns a 300-square-meter house. According to the declaration, the head of Chechnya and his family members do not own any cars.

However, Kadyrov's ostentatiously luxurious lifestyle brings into question the veracity of his declaration of income.

**"FROM A YOUNG AGE, I HAVE BEEN COLLECTING WATCHES, KNIVES AND OTHER OBJECTS THAT ONCE BELONGED TO GREAT PEOPLE."**

RAMZAN KADYROV

This luxurious lifestyle has been discussed in the Russian media on numerous occasions. Thus, in 2009, the Vedomosti newspaper noticed that Kadyrov's watch is a Bovet brand Fleurier Minute Repeater model in 18K white gold. The retail price of this watch is \$300,000.<sup>96</sup> In 2015, the RBC newspaper published a picture of Kadyrov wearing a GreubelForsey brand watch Tourbillon 24 Secondes Contemporain model, which is priced at \$280,000.<sup>97</sup>

In his comment on the publication, Kadyrov admitted that he owns an entire collection of expensive watches and other objects, the value of which considerably exceeds his official income. "The photo shows by no means the most expensive watch from my rare collection. From a young age, I have been collecting watches, knives and other objects that once belonged to great people," he declared.<sup>98</sup>

Kadyrov's fleet of automobiles would make any oligarch envious. In 2008, a video was made public which showed Ramzan Kadyrov's motorcade composed of roughly fifty cars. The video shows up to ten BMWs, nine Porsche Cayennes, two Mercedes-Benz S-Class sedans, several Mercedes G-Class sedans, eight Lexus LX 470s, and more than a dozen Russian Volgas and Zhigulis. The approximate value of the motorcade is € 2 million. The maintenance cost for such a fleet is estimated at \$10,000 to \$12,000 a day. However, these vehicles are probably just part of an enormous fleet of automobiles belonging to the Chechen president. The cars that Kadyrov has at his disposal would suit any taste. For example, according to the journalist Kseniya Sokolova, who went to Tsentaroi to interview Kadyrov, a black Hummer, a Lexus 4x4 and Lamborghini sports cars were parked in the yard of his residence.<sup>99</sup>

Nor does Kadyrov the "collector" scrimp on vacations. In order to understand what the head Chechnya does to unwind, it is sufficient to recall the details of his July 2011 family vacation, when he spent one week in the five-star hotel Mardan Palace on the shores of Antalya, Turkey.

The Chechen president's retinue occupied fifty hotel rooms, each of them costing \$17,000 a day. Kadyrov himself settled into a three-bedroom presidential suite equipped with a private cinema and a pool. Kadyrov spent his vacation on a royal scale. He drove around in a €2 million Rolls Royce Phantom Cabrio, swam in an enormous pool with a glass aquarium full of sharks in the middle, and took steam baths in a room with gold-plated fittings.<sup>100</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov's lifestyle in Chechnya is equally impressive. In 2012, photographs were published depicting the residence of Chechnya's president in his native village of Tsentaroi. The construction of this enormous 260,000-square-meter palace cost 10 billion rubles. The palace's maintenance personnel and housekeeping staff numbers around 100 employees. There are 84 million rubles allocated from Chechnya's budget for the upkeep and maintenance of the residence.<sup>101</sup> However, Kadyrov's appetites are constantly increasing. In 2014, the Chechen budget allocated 40 million rubles for the residence's landscaping alone.<sup>102</sup>

"This cannot be called a house anymore," says the journalist Kseniya Sokolova, who has visited Ramzan Kadyrov's residence a number of times. "In 2004, he had a house in Tsentaroi. Then it became a palace. And in 2014, this had become a building of an incredible size with private quarters for Putin."<sup>103</sup>

According to Kadyrov's acquaintances, the Chechen leader even has a private zoo. "Yes, he has a zoo in his residence. There are tigers, lions, pumas and panthers. Kadyrov likes predators very much. It's very beautiful," Igor Lebedenko<sup>104</sup>, a football player for Terek Grozny, said after visiting the presidential residence. Another player for Terek Grozny, Antonio Ferreira, posted a picture with a puma in his arms that was taken during his visit to Kadyrov's residence.<sup>105</sup>

And State Duma Member Leonid Slutsky presented Kadyrov with yet another puma. Six people brought the cage with the animal into the banquet room during Kadyrov's birthday party. "I know you have bears, lions, tigers and leopards, and now a puma will join your zoo," the Duma deputy said in his birthday speech.<sup>106</sup>

Of all his animals, Kadyrov has a particularly soft spot for horses. He owns stables with elite racers. As the politician himself admits, he owns eight "great stallions" costing from \$300,000 to \$2.5 million each.<sup>107</sup> However, according to the Russian database of horse racing tracks, as of February 2016, Ramzan Kadyrov owns 102 registered racers, and each of them brings their owner profit.

**"KADYROV OWNS THE ENTIRE REPUBLIC, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM."**



SERGEI STEPASHIN,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE AUDIT CHAMBER  
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
FROM 2000 TO 2013

Photo: Maksim Kvasha/Kommersant, EPA, AP Photo, AFP Photo



However, not one of these horses is mentioned in his income declaration.

It is worth mentioning that the discrepancy between official income and actual living standards is a typical phenomenon for Russian officials. Kadyrov's example, however, cannot be compared to that of any governor or minister. No other representative of the Russian authorities allows himself to make such an ostentatious display of his luxurious lifestyle and to throw money about in public. Neither the law-enforcement bodies nor secret services nor the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation ask Kadyrov any awkward questions about the sources of his wealth. Everyone understands that it is Russia's president himself who allows Kadyrov to behave in this manner.

Commenting on the 2009 declaration of income of the Chechen leader, Sergei Stepashin, Chairman of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, openly admitted: "Kadyrov owns the entire republic, so don't worry about him."<sup>108</sup>







## CHAPTER 4

# A PRIVATE ARMY

IN GROZNY IN LATE DECEMBER 2014, RAMZAN KADYROV CARRIED OUT AN INSPECTION OF ARMED TROOPS UNDER HIS CONTROL. AROUND 20,000 FULLY EQUIPPED AND ARMED COMBATANTS WERE GATHERED IN THE CITY STADIUM. AFTER PERFORMING A SORT OF A VICTORY LAP IN FRONT OF HIS SOLDIERS, KADYROV MADE A SPEECH IN WHICH HE REFERRED TO HIMSELF AND TO THOSE PRESENT AS "PUTIN'S COMBAT INFANTRY."

## COMBAT TROOPS

Chechnya's president was being rather deceitful. Thousands of armed combatants gathered in the stadium represented Kadyrov's personal combat infantry loyal first of all to him--not to the federal authorities. Only in Chechnya did the Kremlin authorize the formation of local armed units under the de facto only of the head of the Republic himself.<sup>109</sup> Kadyrov's battalions are the country's only ethnicity-based fighting forces, although Russian law does not contain such a provision.<sup>110</sup>

The loyalty of combatants to Kadyrov can be explained first of all by the biographies of many of them. The core of Chechnya's law-enforcement structures consists of former separatists who were granted amnesty through Kadyrov's decision. The Chechen leader also authorized them to carry weapons again, but this time under his control. As a result, former rebels who fought against the Russian army owe not only their jobs and wages to Kadyrov, but also their lives and freedom.

According to experts, the total number of Kadyrovites is close to 30,000 people.<sup>111</sup> A considerable number of them are officers of the Russian Interior Ministry or servicemen of the Interior Ministry's Internal Troops. In reality, the armed units operating in Chechen territory are loyal only to Chechnya's president: they are not controlled by the federal

**"IN ALL OTHER RUSSIAN REGIONS, INTERIOR MINISTRY OFFICERS AND SERVICEMEN PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE LAW, WHILE IN CHECHNYA, THEY PLEDGE PERSONAL ALLEGIANCE TO KADYROV."**



DMITRI GUDKOV,  
STATE DUMA DEPUTY

authorities. Chechen law-enforcement officers often demonstrate their loyalty to the head of the republic by adding specific details to their uniforms, such as "KRA" (Kadyrov Ramzan Akhmatovich) patches on their caps and uniforms. License plates with the letters KRA in Chechnya also often signify that the owner of the car is an employee of Chechen law-enforcement or administrative bodies.

"Can you imagine a Moscow policeman wearing a cap with [Mayor] Sobyenin's initials? Or another one in Nizhny Novgorod with the initials of [Governor] Shantsev?" asks State Duma Member Dmitri Gudkov. "In all other Russian regions, Interior Ministry officers and servicemen pledge allegiance to the law, while in Chechnya they pledge personal allegiance to Kadyrov."



## THE CORE OF KADYROV'S ARMY<sup>112</sup>



**Non-departmental security forces of the Chechen Interior Ministry**

Up to 3,000 soldiers



**SWAT regiment of the Chechen Interior Ministry**

Up to 1,800 soldiers



**Separate regiments of the patrol-guard service**

Up to 3,000 soldiers



**Riot police forces of the Interior Ministry**

300 soldiers



**Kadyrov's personal security service**

Up to 500 guards



**Sever (North) and Yug (South) Battalions of the 46th division of the Internal Troops of the Russian Interior Ministry**

Up to 2,000 soldiers



**Security squadrons assigned to commandant's offices**

Up to 1,000 soldiers



**Two special units of the 42nd motorized rifle division**

Up to 500 soldiers

Kadyrov also pays considerable attention to the training of new soldiers for his army. In Chechnya, new combatants are recruited at a very young age. For example, a project called “Young Fortress” is being implemented, which is in fact a training camp for young Chechen combatants. Adolescents from disadvantaged families live in barracks and spend their days learning how to fight and kill. In 2009, a documentary about the “Young Fortress” camp was broadcast on Grozny TV. The footage shows 12-year-old children praying together, chanting “Allahu Akbar,” marching on the drill square and shooting military weapons under the supervision of Kadyrov himself.<sup>113</sup> Adolescents are being raised in the traditions of Islam and in loyalty to Chechnya's president.

## COMBAT READINESS

The regional ethnic-based army that was formed in Chechnya is perhaps the most combat-efficient military force in modern Russia.

Kadyrov's SWAT team plays an important role in its structure. Daniil Martynov, an experienced officer of the Russian secret services, is responsible for the training of SWAT operatives. In 2013, after leaving the FSB's Alpha fast-response team, Martynov was appointed as an assistant to the head of Chechnya. Martynov's former colleagues saw his change of jobs as treason.<sup>114</sup> They are seriously concerned that the combatants who the Russian officer is training will once again use weapons against Russian soldiers, as was the case in the 1990s and in the early 2000s.

The Russian authorities also find this cooperation alarming. Thus, in 2013, a State Duma Deputy from United Russia, Alexei Zhuravlyov, sent a request to the Federal Security Service demanding an investigation into the legality of a former Alpha officer being responsible for the training of Kadyrov's combatants. “Exercises of Chechen commandos under Martynov's supervision look strange. These guys certainly do not look like they follow the regulations of Russia's armed forces. Can such special groups be legally formed in any subject of the Russian Federation or is it only the privilege of Chechnya? I consulted with specialists, and they are all perplexed,” the lawmaker said.<sup>115</sup>

Meanwhile, Martynov's work is paying off, and the “Chechen SWAT team” has reached a new level of professionalism. For example, in April 2015, Chechen combatants won the Special Forces championship in Jordan. Forty-three teams from around the world participated in this championship.<sup>116</sup>

Kadyrov's combatants, however, not only demonstrate their efficiency during international competitions, but also in actual combat conditions. Thus, whole military units from Chechnya fought against Ukrainian troops during the armed conflict in the Donbass.

On May 26, 2014, a video recorded during a rally of Ukrainian separatists in Donetsk was made public. The footage showed a truck parked on the city square with about two dozen people inside who were mostly of North Caucasian appearance and who were armed with guns. During an interview with a CNN journalist, one of them says: “We are the Kadyrovites.” In response to the journalist's question, he clarifies that he is an operative of the Chechen Interior Ministry agencies.<sup>117</sup>

Photo: Yuri Tutov/Kommersant, Sergey Ponomarev

The first serious losses among Chechen combatants fighting alongside the separatists were reported on May 26, the same day that armed units of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) attacked the city airport controlled by Ukrainian forces. Two trucks transporting combatants were destroyed as a result of the hostilities. Doctor Denis Kloss confirmed the information about the participation of Chechens in the fighting. “I was in the second truck with injured Chechens. A bomb got under our truck and turned it over, and the front wheels were torn away. Then the shooting started. We began stopping cars on the road, loaded the injured in them and sent them to hospital,” he said. DPR Premier Alexander Borodai declared that 33 Russians had been identified among those killed on May 26. Borodai emphasized that there are many ethnic Chechens among DPR combatants who are “ready to defend their Russian brothers.”<sup>118</sup>

On August 29, 2014, a video recorded by a Chechen combatant on the Russian-Ukrainian border was made public. The footage shows a dialogue between two combatants speaking Chechen in front of a column of tanks and other armored vehicles. “This is our column, one cannot see either its beginning or its end, and we are ready for invasion. Allahu akbar!” the combatant said to the camera. “There are Chechens here. Those tankers here are Chechens.” “We are going to war to leave the khokhly [a derogatory term for Ukrainians] in tatters. Inshallah!” says a driver mechanic in sunglasses looking out of the tank hatch.<sup>119</sup>

On November 19, 2014, documentary evidence emerged relating to the formation of a Chechen Death Battalion in the Donbass composed of veterans of Ramzan Kadyrov's law-enforcement structures. Marina Akhmedova, special correspondent for the Russkii Reporter journal, published conversations with battalion commanders that took place in the territory of a base camp in the Donetsk region.<sup>120</sup> Combatants from this battalion participated in the battle for the Donetsk airport and in fighting in the town of Illovaysk. According to commanders, among the

combatants of the Death Battalion, “90 percent are former separatists” who had fought against the Russian army but joined Ramzan Kadyrov's law-enforcement structures after having been amnestied. The identity of one commander of the Death Battalion was established: Apti Denisoltanovich Bolotkhanov is a former commander of the 3rd patrol squadron of the South Battalion of the Internal Troops of the Russian Interior Ministry. (4157th military unit, motorized infantry division — village of Vedeno, Chechen Republic). He holds the rank of major in Russia's Interior Ministry, and in 2008, by Ramzan Kadyrov's decree, he was awarded the Medal of Merit for the Chechen Republic.

On December 10, 2014, a video showing the Death Battalion's movement in the territory of the Donbass was made public. One of the commanders of the battalion, nicknamed Stinger, says that the unit has “around 300 fighters in the Donetsk region” with at least 10 years of experience. According to him, up to 70 percent of combatants are former Special Forces operatives, and most of them hold government awards. “We are soldiers of the Russian Army and Russian secret services, most of us are war veterans,” the Death Battalion commander stated.<sup>121</sup>

## THUGS

In recent years, Kadyrov's combatants have become active in Moscow as well. While in Chechnya their main objective consists in protecting the regime established by their boss, they consider the rest of Russia to be potential trophy.

THE KADYROVITES MARCHING IN GROZNY







KADYROV'S MOSCOW "BODYGUARDS:" JUNIOR SERGEANT YUNUS RASUKHADZHIYEV (LEFT) WAS ARRESTED IN MOSCOW AND RELEASED, HIS COLLEAGUE (RIGHT) IS WEARING A CAP WITH RAMZAN KADYROV'S INITIALS

Organized crime groups formed by Chechen thugs are operating in Russian regions. Some crime bosses enjoy Kadyrov's direct support and public protection. For instance, in 2011, Khadzhimurat Gakayev, a crime boss known in the criminal world as Murat Bolshoi (Murat the Big), was arrested in Moscow.<sup>122</sup> Gakayev's organized criminal group specialized in extortion and swindling, and Murat Bolshoi was accused of attempting an illegal takeover of a building belonging to the Russian Academy of Science in Moscow. The criminal case file contained a video depicting Gakayev armed with a gun hitting an entrepreneur on the face; the entrepreneur was renting the building from the Academy.<sup>123</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov immediately came to the defense of the arrested crime boss. He said that Murat Bolshoi was the son of a professor and owned a legal business. "In fact, he was provoked," Chechnya's president explained.

Yet another person close to Kadyrov, Ramzan Tsitsulayev, the "Chechen president's official representative," also managed to escape criminal liability. The Moscow police suspected him of extorting a large amount of money from the wife of an arrested businessman, Andrei Novikov. According to investigators, Tsitsulayev promised to provide assistance in the businessman's release if Novikov's wife paid him \$500,000. In November 2014, operatives of the criminal investigation department planned a special operation to catch Tsitsulayev red-handed. They tried to detain the suspect when he was receiving money in the Zolotoye Koltso hotel, but were pushed back by Tsitsulayev's armed bodyguards who had received training in Kadyrov's security forces. Tsitsulayev left the hotel and flew back to Chechnya the same day. Earlier, this individual had been known for representing Kadyrov's interests in Ukraine. For instance, in the spring of 2014, on the orders of the Chechen leader, Tsitsulayev was involved in freeing LifeNews "reporters" who had been taken prisoner by Ukrainian security forces in the combat zone.<sup>124</sup>

Since 2012, it has been known that Kadyrov's security service has an "office in the capital" located in Moscow's President Hotel. The staff of this organization has been estimated at dozens of combatants, with automatic firearms, pistols, and cars equipped with special ID cards at their disposal. Sulim Yamadayev, commander of the Vostok Battalion, had mentioned this division back in 2008. "The Kadyrovites have turned the President Hotel into a

ADAM ISRAILOV, ONE OF KADYROV'S ARRESTED "BODYGUARDS" (THE NEPHEW OF DEMON)



CRIME BOSS  
MURAT THE BIG

barrack--200 people stay there at all times and drive around Moscow with flashing lights, as if it were Chechnya," he told a reporter from Kommersant magazine.<sup>125</sup> The leadership of this division was entrusted to Zelimkhan Israilov, nicknamed Demon<sup>126</sup>, an officer in the Chechen Interior Ministry's internal security office. This "law-enforcement officer" has himself been featured on several occasions in Moscow's criminal news. In 2007, he started a roadside fight with a driver of a Lada 2109 by the name of Kochetkov, who hit his head on the curb and died. The criminal investigation was closed, however. In 2009, Israilov used his service gun to shoot the leg of the driver of a bus who had cut him off. This criminal case, too, has not reached the courts.

In 2012, a group of Kadyrovites led by Israilov was arrested in Moscow on suspicion of kidnapping for the purpose of extortion. The operation that resulted in their arrest was conducted by the Moscow SWAT team in the "Vremena Goda" shopping mall, and it was only by some miracle that the operation ended without casualties: most of the combatants were armed and carried Chechen police ID cards.

Investigators have collected exhaustive evidence of the suspects' guilt, including witness statements, telephone billing information, and the recording of the Kadyrovites' conversations in pretrial detention, where they gave orders to

Photo: Novaya Gazeta, EPA

intimidate witnesses. Alexander Bastrykin, chairman of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, took this case under his personal supervision. Yet this did not help. High-ranking protectors of the Kadyrovites intervened, and they were all released. The criminal investigation was soon closed, and investigator Chingis Berikov, who stubbornly refused to close it, was fired. As a result, several officers from the FSB central staff refused to report for work in protest of the protection of the suspects in this case. The indignant FSB officers told Novaya Gazeta that "An assistant to the FSB director came in and conveyed an order from the very top: do not touch Kadyrov's entourage."<sup>127</sup>

Commenting on this case, Ramzan Kadyrov's press secretary said that the head of Chechnya does not even have bodyguards.<sup>128</sup> However, he refrained from commenting on the fact that mission orders for the protection of Kadyrov himself and his family members were confiscated from the accused combatants during their arrest.

Another one of Kadyrov's security service offices was located in Novo-Peredelkino. Combatants from this group carried ID cards from the Chechen directorate of the FSB, and their official responsibilities included the protection of State Duma members from Chechnya as well as of Umar Dzhabrailov, a businessman close to the Chechen president. It was Dzhabrailov who, together with Ruslan Baisarov, presented Kadyrov with a Ferrari Testarossa worth €450,000 for his 30th birthday. The office was headed by Rustam Agayev, an FSB operative from Chechnya, who had earlier been detained in connection with a kidnapping, along with Israilov (Demon).<sup>129</sup>

However, in addition to protecting businessmen and politicians close to Kadyrov, the "Chechen department" of the FSB in Moscow also provided strong-arm assistance to crime bosses. Thus, in June 2012, Moscow police operatives were carrying out an operation to apprehend Adam Taramov, a crime boss nicknamed "Bad Boy," on suspicion of involvement in a series of assaults and robberies. Taramov's car was stopped on Kutuzovsky Prospect. However, soon after the suspect had made a telephone call, several Chechen natives appeared on the spot and blocked the policemen. REN TV journalists captured on video an athletic-looking individual of North Caucasian appearance who produced an ID card of an FSB operative named Tarkhan Kurbanov.<sup>130</sup> He was openly carrying a Stechkin pistol with a mother-of-pearl handle on his belt. Later, in an interview with Novaya Gazeta, Rustam Agayev admitted that Kurbanov was his employee.<sup>131</sup>

In 2014, "Kadyrov's FSB operatives" became involved in yet another criminal case of extortion. A group of armed combatants dressed in black uniforms led by Agayev took over a notary office belonging to the wife of a member of the Russian Federation Council, Mikhail Kapura. After introducing himself as an FSB operative, Agayev demanded that the politician pay him \$2 million. Kapura's assistants called the police, and all the combatants were arrested.<sup>132</sup>

In 2015, Agayev and his colleagues were at last convicted. The court confirmed his guilt in extorting \$2 million "for personal profit with mercenary motives." Agayev was sentenced to 11 years in a maximum-security prison; four of his fellow countrymen received sentences ranging from 7.5 to 10 years. 133 penitentiary; four of his fellow countrymen received sentences ranging from 7.5 to 10 years.<sup>133</sup>

APTI BOLOTKHANOV, COMMANDER OF KADYROV'S DEATH BATTALION (LEFT)



IDENTITY DOCUMENT No196 ISSUED TO THE NAME OF BOLOTKHANOV APTI DENISOLTANOVICH ATTESTING THAT HE IS FULFILLING AN ASSIGNMENT OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE



RUSTAM AGAYEV



**"THE KADYROVITES HAVE TURNED THE PRESIDENT HOTEL INTO A BARRACK — 200 PEOPLE STAY THERE AT ALL TIMES AND DRIVE AROUND MOSCOW WITH FLASHING LIGHTS, AS IF IT WERE CHECHNYA."**



SULIM YAMADAYEV, COMMANDER OF THE VOSTOK BATTALION



IN THE YEARS SINCE RAMZAN KADYROV ROSE TO POWER IN CHECHNYA, HE HAS BUILT AROUND HIMSELF A CONSOLIDATED NETWORK THAT CONTROLS CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL, MILITARY AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES. KADYROV REFERS TO THOSE CLOSE TO HIM AS HIS “BROTHERS.” MANY CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY CLOSE, FAMILY-LIKE TIES. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT IN ITALY, THE WORD “MAFIA” IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NOTION OF FAMILY.

## CHAPTER 5

# KADYROV'S FRIENDS

### FAMILY TIES

In the infancy of mankind, the first communities were based on blood ties. In the modern world, appointing one's relatives to positions of authority provokes a feeling of distrust toward the manager and suspicions of corrupt practices. However, this is not the case in Chechnya. Ramzan Kadyrov has no scruples about appointing his relatives to top posts. This is, in fact, an important characteristic of his policy. The head of Chechnya relies on his nephews, sisters and cousins.

Thus, Islam Kadyrov, Ramzan Kadyrov's nephew, is the Chechen leader's chief of staff. Kadyrov trusts him and tries to strengthen his position in Chechnya. Thanks to the support of his high-ranking uncle, Islam Kadyrov's political influence has been growing steadily, and his role in the Chechen president's close circle has become increasingly important. His duties are to control Chechnya's shadow economy. Islam Kadyrov's status virtually puts him in charge of the heads of districts and makes him a sort of inspector whose responsibility it is to make sure that local financial flows go to the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation, which has long become the Chechen president's personal pocketbook.

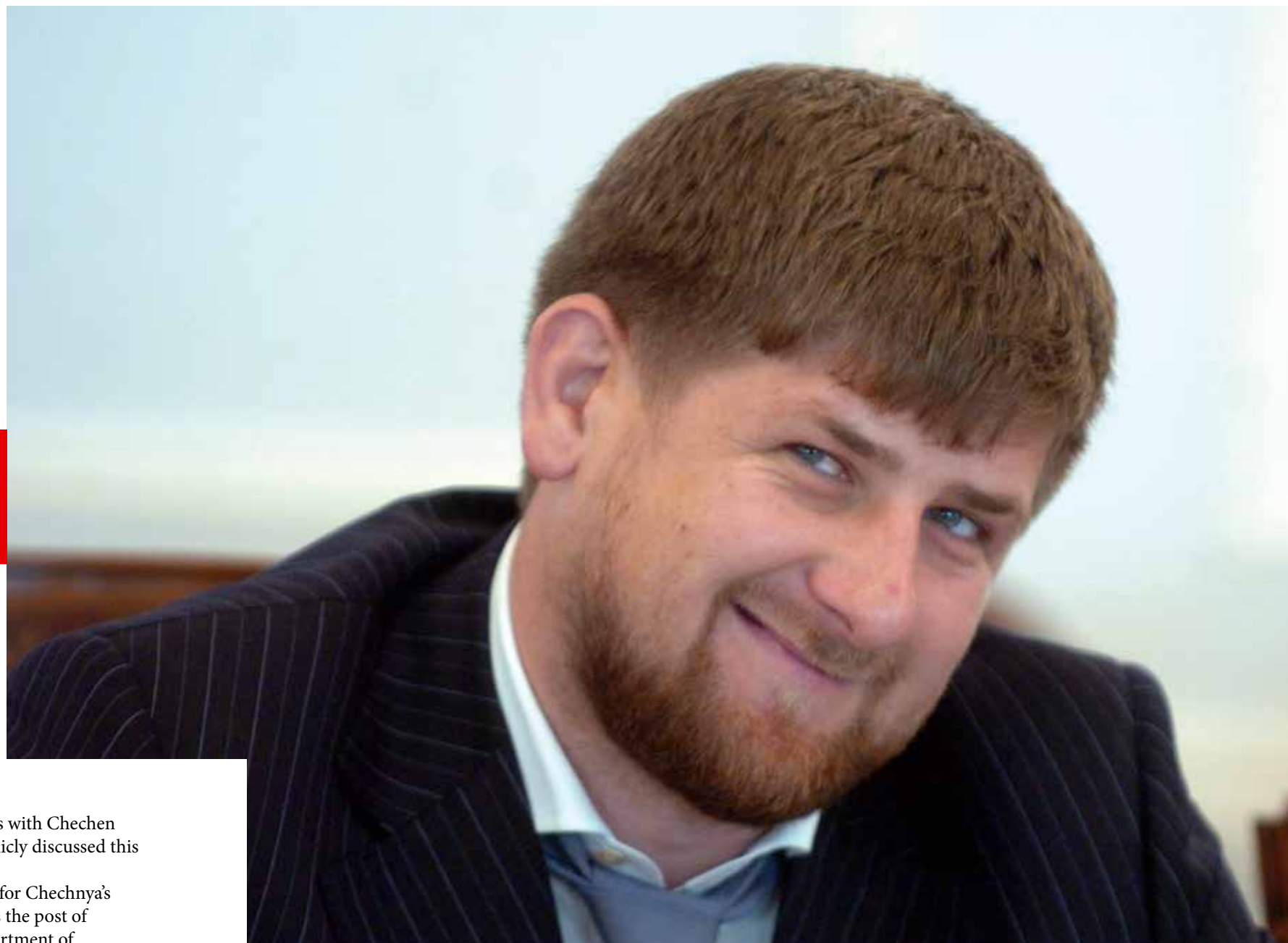
Kadyrov's cousin, Abubakar Edelgeriyev, heads the Chechen government. Kadyrov believes that Edelgeriyev has potential, and has repeatedly named him as his

potential successor during his meetings with Chechen politicians. However, he has never publicly discussed this scenario.

Kadyrov's sisters are responsible for Chechnya's social sphere. Zulay Kadyrova occupies the post of deputy head of the administrative department of the Chechen president. Zargan Kadyrova oversees Chechnya's system of preschool education. “The social sphere has become a bottomless source of corruption. Local authorities overestimate Chechnya's population by around a third. Consequently, ‘dead souls’ are receiving payments, pensions, and benefits from the budget. In reality, this money ends up in the pockets of officials or get transferred to the accounts of the Kadyrov Foundation,” explains Novaya Gazeta correspondent Yelena Milashina.

Yet another relative of Kadyrov, Khasan Taymaskhanov, also enjoys considerable influence in Chechnya. An official assistant to the head of the Republic, he oversees courts, tax authorities and local justice matters, including personnel appointments in this sector. Taymaskhanov's clan is very close to Kadyrov. His relatives head the Ministry of Industry and Justice, the Federal Drug Control Service and one of the republic's major universities. In addition, Bekkhan Taymaskhanov, the head of Chechnya's representative office in Moscow, oversees the cash flow from Chechen businessmen residing in Russia's capital into the Kadyrov Foundation.

Photo: Mikhail Razuvaev/Kommersant, AP Photo, EPA



RAMZAN KADYROV WITH ENTREPRENEURS RUSLAN BAISAROV AND UMAR DZHABRAILOV





RAMZAN KADYROV  
AND ADAM DELIMKHANOV

## BUSINESSMEN AND KILLERS

As previously noted, Kadyrov's key financial instrument, in addition to Chechnya's budget, is the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation. This structure enjoys multiple funding sources. Two Chechen businessmen, Ruslan Baisarov and Umar Dzhabrailov, are among the Foundation's largest contributors.

Thanks to his political influence, Kadyrov makes it possible for his friends to reap gigantic profits. For instance, on Kadyrov's initiative, enormous amounts of money were allocated for the construction of a ski resort in the Chechen mountains. For these purposes, the state-owned corporation Vnesheconombank allocated 10.2 billion rubles to a small company, OOO Veduchi, which had an authorized capital of 10,000 rubles. The company's owner, Ruslan Baisarov, became the main beneficiary of the project.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the entrepreneur received additional benefits from the state in the form of tax breaks and public funds to cover the construction of general utilities.<sup>136</sup>

The head of Chechnya also used his political influence to help Baisarov solve his personal problems. Thus, in 2009, a scandal broke out when the businessman tried to take his son away from his ex-wife, the pop singer Kristina Orbakaite. Kadyrov interfered in the argument. He personally called his friend Vladislav Surkov, who was then-first deputy chief of staff at the Kremlin, and asked him to help resolve the issue.<sup>137</sup>

Some refer to Baisarov as Kadyrov's wallet. Analysts believe that he oversees the Chechen leader's Moscow business.<sup>138</sup>

Kadyrov has been protecting Umar Dzhabrailov's interests just as diligently. The two men used to be very close. They have been repeatedly seen together at high society events and parties in Moscow clubs.<sup>139</sup> In 2006, "on behalf of the people," Dzhabrailov publicly called on Chechen President Alu Alkhanov to concede his post to Ramzan Kadyrov.<sup>140</sup> In recent years, their relationship has cooled somewhat, but the close connection between them has remained as strong as before.

Dzhabrailov represented Chechnya in the Russian Federation Council for five years, which guaranteed him immunity from criminal prosecution. The head of Chechnya also provided his friend with armed bodyguards from law-enforcement structures under his control, such as the Chechen directorate of the FSB.<sup>141</sup>

In Dzhabrailov's case, protection from the law and from physical threats was a valuable favor. He had made a lot of enemies during his years as a businessman and had attracted the attention of law-enforcement bodies on a number of occasions. For example, during an assassination attempt on Moscow's deputy mayor, Iosif Ordzhonikidze, his bodyguards killed one of the assailants who turned out to be Umar Dzhabrailov's brother, Salavat Dzhabrailov. Moreover, investigators believed that it was probably Umar Dzhabrailov who had ordered the hit.<sup>142</sup> The businessman was also involved in another criminal case. In 2014, five of his bodyguards from among Kadyrov's law-enforcement officers received prison sentences for extortion from Senator Mikhail Kapura. Dzhabrailov's residence was searched in the context of this case, and he was questioned by investigators.<sup>143</sup> However, in both cases investigators failed to send the influential Chechen businessman to jail.

Photo: Dmitry Korotayev/Kommersant, AP Photo



RAMZAN KADYROV  
AND MAGOMED DAUDOV (AKA LORD)

Entrepreneurs pay generously for Kadyrov's friendship and good graces. In addition to transferring large sums of money into the accounts of the Kadyrov Foundation, they lavish the head of Chechnya with gifts. Thus, for Ramzan's 30th birthday, Umar Dzhabrailov and Ruslan Baisarov presented him with a Ferrari Testarossa worth €450,000.<sup>144</sup> Baisarov is also a major sponsor of the Terek football club, which is one of Kadyrov's pet projects.<sup>145</sup>

## POLITICIANS AND EXECUTIONERS

Adam Delimkhanov, a member of the State Duma from United Russia and Kadyrov's cousin, is also his right-hand man. According to Kadyrov, this man is his "closest friend, more than a brother." He also sees him as his potential successor in the position of the head of the Chechen republic.<sup>146</sup>

During the First Chechen War, Delimkhanov fought alongside the separatists and was close to the notorious terrorist Salman Raduyev, working as his personal driver.<sup>147</sup> When the Second Chechen War broke out, Delimkhanov joined the federal forces and headed the Chechen Interior Ministry's so-called "oil regiment" that was responsible for defending pipelines in the territory of the republic. According to observers, with the help of combatants under his control, Delimkhanov monopolized the right to install illegal pipeline junctions, thus pushing away all outsiders.<sup>148</sup> Delimkhanov allegedly personally gave money to Ramzan Kadyrov that came from the illegal sale of oil products.<sup>149</sup>

Kadyrov was the one who encouraged the former rebel's political career by first appointing him to the Chechen government, then by securing him a safe place on the United Russia party list during the parliamentary elections.

The relationship between Kadyrov and his cousin has been truly close and was probably sealed with someone else's blood. According to several sources, in Kadyrov's close circle it is Delimkhanov who is responsible for all the dirty work relating to the physical elimination of Kadyrov's enemies. Delimkhanov was suspected of involvement in the Moscow assassination of FSB Lieutenant-Colonel Movladi Baisarov, commander of the "Gorets" special division. "According to my sources, Adam Delimkhanov personally oversaw the special operation," notes Mikhail Markelov, a member of the State Duma Committee on Security.<sup>150</sup> Delimkhanov was put on Interpol's wanted list for masterminding the murder of Sulim Yamadayev in Dubai.<sup>151</sup> The name of Delimkhanov is also connected to the assassination of Boris Nemtsov. His killer, Zaur Dadayev, who was detained by investigators, turned out to be the deputy commander of Chechnya's Sever (North) Battalion, which is led by Delimkhanov's brother, Alibek.<sup>152</sup> According to Isa Yamadayev, who, unlike his brothers, survived the assassination attempt by the Kadyrovites, Delimkhanov's wellknown nickname in Chechnya is "the Butcher."<sup>153</sup>

Foreign secret services are also well acquainted with Delimkhanov's name. In the United States, he is suspected of a connection with the international crime syndicate Bratski Krug (the Brothers' Circle).<sup>154</sup> This mafia structure includes major crime organizations operating in post-Soviet, European, Middle Eastern and Latin American countries.



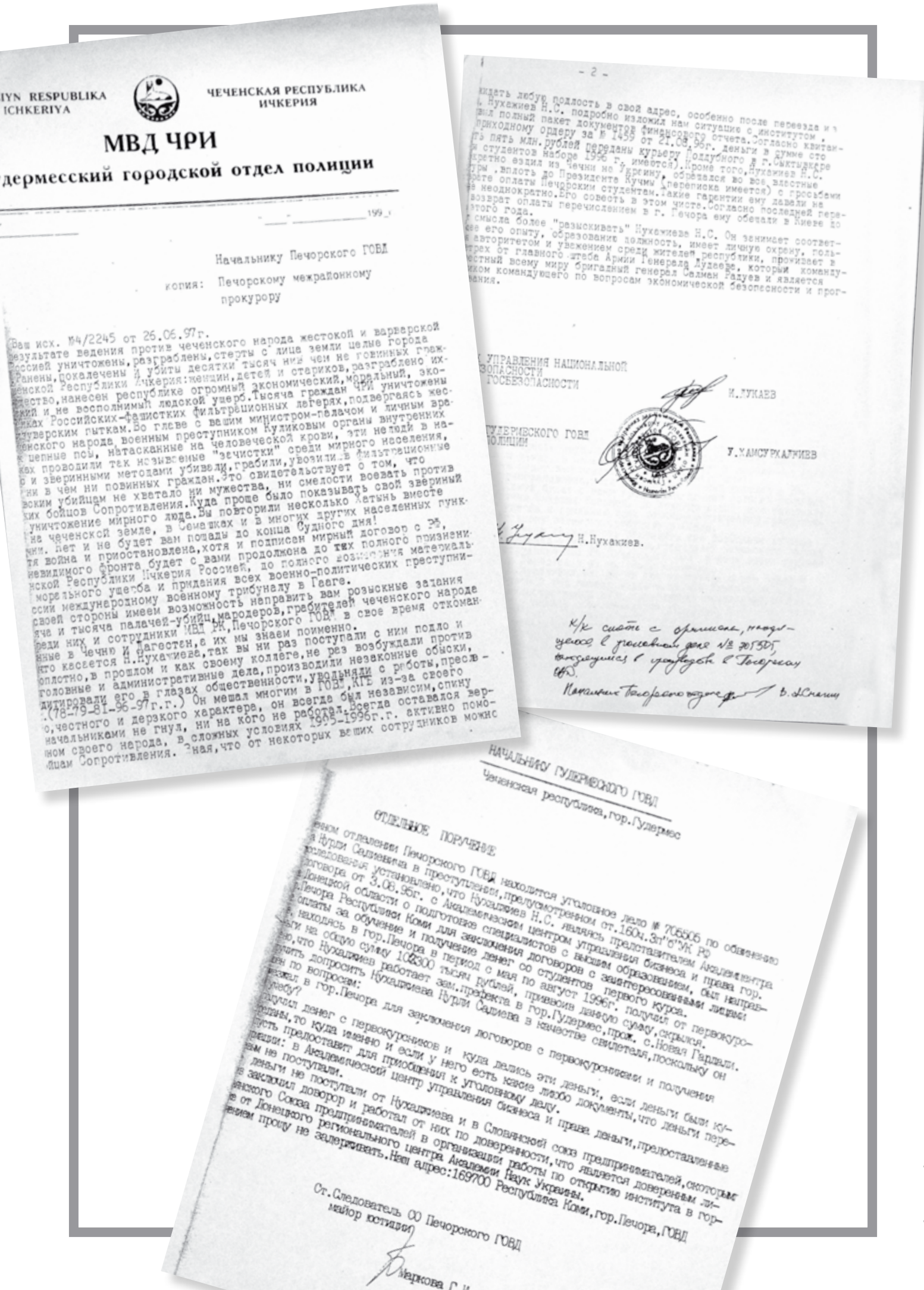
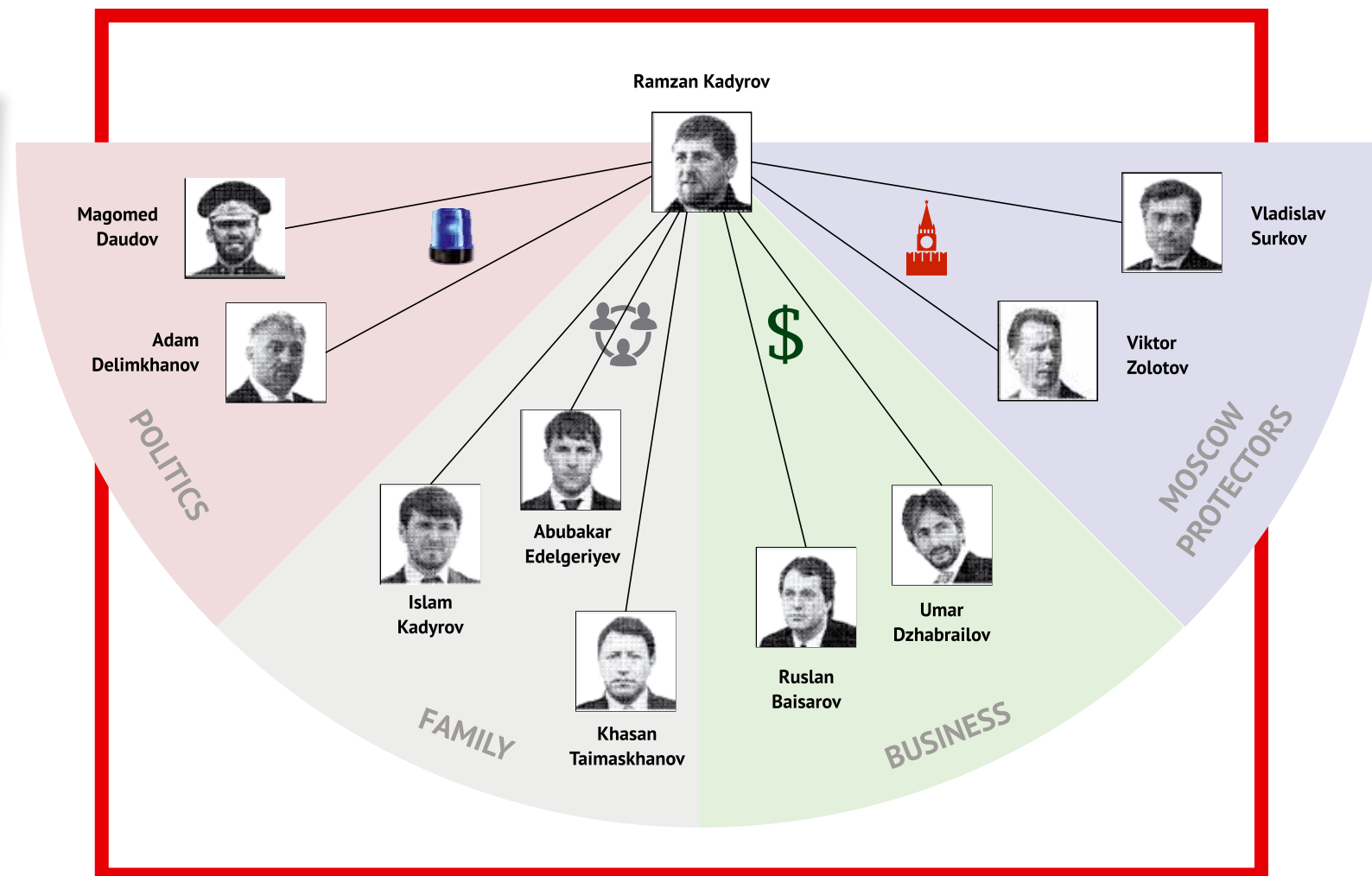


Photo: AP Photo



Delimkhanov is one of Chechnya's richest men. As Kadyrov's potential successor, he tries to keep up with his boss's lifestyle. Thus, he occupies the 313th position on the list of Russian billionaires, with his wealth estimated at no less than 9 billion rubles.<sup>155</sup> Delimkhanov built an enormous palace for his brother and himself in his home village of Dzhalka. "There are a few buildings of stately proportions and a few streets in the center of the village, the reconstruction of which was paid for by Delimkhanov himself. This is an absolutely feudal story about a prince who made it possible for himself to arrive at his residence in style," said journalist Ivan Sukhov after visiting Chechnya.<sup>156</sup>

Delimkhanov also shows a liking for extravagant luxury. In 2011, he had a fight in the State Duma with a colleague from the United Russia caucus, Alexey Zhuravlev. Having suspected the latter of a dislike toward Kadyrov, the Chechen legislator smashed his face in and threatened to kill him. According to witnesses, during the fight, a golden gun fell out of Delimkhanov's pocket.<sup>157</sup> Soon afterwards, it became known that the gun was Kadyrov's gift, which Delimkhanov carries everywhere he goes, even in the parliament building. All of those who are close to the head of Chechnya own golden guns which are given to them as gifts. This is a distinctive symbol of Kadyrov's close circle. It is also worth mentioning that after the attack, Zhuravlev ceased all criticism of Kadyrov and recalled the parliamentary requests that had annoyed top Chechen officials.

Magomed Daudov, also known as "Lord," is yet another official close to Kadyrov who enjoys considerable

influence in Chechnya. He is believed to have eliminated the organizer of the May 9, 2004, terrorist attack that caused the death of Akhmad Kadyrov, thus winning the favor of Chechnya's current leader.<sup>158</sup> Daudov holds the "Hero of Russia" title.

"Lord" has been gradually increasing his influence in Chechnya. In 2007, he was police chief in the Shali district of Chechnya. Five years later, Kadyrov appointed him as his chief of staff.

Chechnya is fairly clearly divided into districts of influence among people from Kadyrov's close circle. Magomed Daudov's domain is his home district of Shali. He is the one who appoints people to top administrative and law-enforcement jobs there.<sup>159</sup> Any attempt to interfere with his sphere of influence provokes an extremely aggressive reaction from Daudov. The confrontation between Daudov and Sergei Bobrov, the head of the Investigative Committee in Chechnya, who was appointed by Moscow, provides a very good example.

Bobrov was sent to Chechnya in 2013. He began by dispersing the Chechen directorate of the Investigative Committee by firing 30 local investigators for official misconduct. The reformed agency then began to actively investigate systematic abductions and tortures that had long become commonplace in Chechnya. Thus, in August 2013, a criminal case was initiated against Chechen policemen who had tortured Umalat Boltiyev with electricity to force him to sign a confession. Digayev, the deputy district police chief of Shali, was detained in connection with this case.





CHECHEN HUMAN RIGHTS  
OMBUDSMAN  
NURDI NUKHAZHIEV

After that, investigators began to experience massive pressure from Kadyrov's law-enforcement officers. For instance, an audiotape of the conversation between Ruslan Izeriyev, chief of the Shali police department, and investigator Rashid Ramzayev, who had authorized the arrest of the former's subordinate officer, was posted on the Internet. The policeman threatened the investigator with rape, saying that a video of the rape would be made public if he did not close the case. Soon after that, a meeting took place between General Bobrov and Magomed Daudov, during which Kadyrov's henchman repeated the threats in a milder form. As a result, the criminal case was closed and Bobrov resigned from the post of the head of the Investigative Committee in Chechnya.<sup>160</sup>

However, this was not the first time that Daudov's name was mentioned in connection with stories of a criminal nature relating to abductions and tortures. The persecution of Chechen activist Ruslan Kutayev became one of the most publicized cases in Chechnya involving "Lord."

In 2014, Kutayev organized a conference in Chechnya on the subject of Stalin's deportation of the Chechen people. This event was not officially authorized and was inconsistent with Kadyrov's official position. The following day, Kadyrov summoned all of the participants of the conference and sharply rebuked them. Although Daudov personally called Kutayev and demanded that he

be present at this meeting, the latter ignored the invitation. Kutayev was arrested the following day, and was charged with the illegal possession of drugs that had been planted on him during the arrest. In court, the activist declared that after being taken from home and beaten up by policemen, he was brought to the basement of a Chechen government building, where the head of "Lord's" security service, Tamerlan Musayev, tortured him with electricity while holding a knife to his throat.<sup>161</sup>

In the summer of 2015, on Kadyrov's initiative, Daudov received the well-respected post of speaker of the Chechen parliament.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND TERRORISTS

The work of human rights activists in Chechnya is associated with big risks. The investigation of kidnappings and tortures is extremely annoying for the Republic's authorities. Kadyrov's systematic threats towards independent human rights activists often result in assaults and acts of vandalism in their offices. "In Chechnya, I am protecting human rights," Kadyrov says, while accusing independent human rights activists of aiding terrorists.<sup>162</sup>

Chechnya's human rights ombudsman, Nurdy Nukhazhiyev, is the person responsible for the protection of human rights in Kadyrov's close circle. He has been occupying this post since 2006, when Kadyrov himself was still prime minister of Chechnya. However, for all these years, Nukhazhiyev has been loyal to the current Chechen leader. He supported him during his confrontation with Alu Alkhanov, and provided assistance with Kadyrov's plot to eliminate the Yamadayev brothers. Nukhazhiyev's longtime loyalty has earned him a place among Kadyrov's close confidants.

Although the duty of the Chechen human rights ombudsman is to protect human rights in general, in fact, his entire job consists of protecting just one person--Ramzan Kadyrov. Nukhazhiyev's role in the entourage of the head of Chechnya is similar to that of Dmitry Peskov in the entourage of Vladimir Putin, and is essentially to publicly defend his boss. Any criticism addressed to Kadyrov provokes an angry backlash from Nukhazhiyev.

His official biography does not give many details. It is known that he sided with the separatists in the 1990s, but switched to the federal forces during the Second Chechen War. It was the elder Kadyrov who invited him to join the administration, and under the younger Kadyrov, the Chechen ombudsman strengthened his position.

However, his official biography does not mention either his criminal past or his ties with the terrorists.

It turns out that Nukhazhiyev's first conviction dates back to 1995, when he opened fire during a fight in a restaurant. Later, in 1997, in the Komi Republic, he was charged under Article 160 of the Russia the current

ombudsman was a common thief. For example, he collected tuition money from first-year college students and fled with it to Chechnya.

While the investigation was underway, the runaway swindler made a quick career in the government of "independent Ichkeria." G.I. Markova, an investigator at the Pechorsk municipal police department, sent a request to her Chechen colleagues for assistance in locating Nukhazhiyev. The official response from the Interior Ministry of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria that has never been published before helps to establish important details of Nukhazhiyev's past. Law-enforcement officials of "independent Chechnya" categorically denied Nukhazhiyev's involvement in any criminal activities and stated that he was being persecuted for his "honest and daring nature." Interior Ministry officials also noted that Nukhazhiyev is well respected in Chechnya, "has bodyguards" and works as an economic adviser to Brigadier General Salman Raduyev.

The name of Salman Raduyev is notorious in Russia. He is a convicted terrorist with the blood of hundreds of people on his hands. His most publicized crime was taking of hostages in the maternity ward of the Kizlyar city hospital.

Raduyev's economic affairs in which, according



CHECHEN TERRORIST SALMAN RADUYEV

to the document, he was assisted by the current Chechen ombudsman, consisted in procuring funds for terrorist activity. For example, in 1997, the Russian secret services caught Nukhazhiyev carrying out illegal financial operations in the town of Ukhta.<sup>163</sup>

Just like many former rebels and terrorists holding posts and receiving salary in Kadyrov's administration, the Chechen ombudsman prefers not to remember his past. Unlike Salman Raduyev, Nukhazhiyev's current protector has no problems with Russian law-enforcement bodies.

## MOSCOW PROTECTORS

General Viktor Zolotov remains one of Kadyrov's most influential friends in Moscow. The head of the Russian president's security service from 2000 to 2013, Zolotov enjoys Vladimir Putin's trust. He later headed the Interior Ministry's internal troops and, in 2015, he was awarded the rank of general of the Russian army.

"During Putin's two presidential terms, he [Zolotov] moved from colonel to colonel-general. He entered Putin's closest, narrowest circle," notes historian Boris Volodarsky, who specializes in the history of secret services.<sup>164</sup>

Kadyrov and Zolotov have had a long-standing relationship. The head of Chechnya has repeatedly received the top law-enforcement official as a guest in his family circle. However, they try not to advertise their friendship. Thanks to Zolotov, the head of Chechnya has direct contact with the Russian president. It is on the general's initiative that Putin met with Kadyrov in the Kremlin on the day of his father's assassination. This meeting in many ways predetermined the subsequent political rise of the younger Kadyrov.

General Viktor Zolotov has been supporting Kadyrov over the years, and even does so publicly whenever necessary.

For example, 2015 was a difficult year for Chechnya's leader. In March, several Kadyrovites were arrested on suspicion of the murder of Boris Nemtsov. Later, a conflict broke out between the federal law-enforcement forces and Kadyrov, during which the latter promised to kill any law-enforcement officials from other regions who worked in the Republic without permission from the local authorities. The frustration of high-ranking opponents of Kadyrov was growing, and there was a moment when it seemed that the question of trust in him could be raised at the highest level.

However, in the fall of 2015, Zolotov paid an official visit to Chechnya, during which, accompanied by Ramzan Kadyrov, he inspected Chechen law-enforcement structures. Kadyrov also received the general in his residence in the family circle. Such a gesture from Putin's close ally was seen as a guarantee of Kadyrov's immunity coming from the head of state.

"This is an approval of Kadyrov that emphasizes his



**KADYROV TURNED  
CHECHNYA INTO  
A SORT OF LEGAL  
OFFSHORE ZONE,  
WHERE HE HARBORS  
DEFENDANTS IN  
CRIMINAL CASES  
LOYAL TO HIM FROM  
THE INVESTIGATORS.”**



GENNADY GUDKOV,  
RETIRED FSB COLONEL

special status and his special relationship with the federal center,” political analyst Mikhail Remizov, president of the Institute of National Strategy, commented on Zolotov’s visit to Chechnya.<sup>165</sup>

Lawyers representing the family of Boris Nemtsov in the criminal investigation into his murder also point to special links between Kadyrov and Zolotov. In November 2015, the attorneys Vadim Prokhorov and Olga Mikhailova sent a request to the Investigative Committee to question Viktor Zolotov as a witness. The attorneys brought the investigators’ attention to the friendship between Zolotov and Kadyrov. According to the lawyers, in his official capacity, Zolotov may possess information about the reason why surveillance cameras of the Federal Protection Service on the Bolshoy Moskvoretsky Bridge, where the tragedy happened, did not function on the night of Boris Nemtsov’s assassination.<sup>166</sup>

Vladislav Surkov is yet another of Kadyrov’s influential protectors in Moscow. From 1999 to 2011, this man worked as the Kremlin’s deputy chief of staff, responsible for domestic policy. Because his father is an ethnic Chechen, Surkov spent his early years in Chechnya. According to the official’s father, Yury Dudayev, in his childhood the boy went by the Chechen name Aslanbek.<sup>167</sup>

The only ethnic Chechen who is a top official in the Kremlin, Surkov quickly found common ground with Ramzan Kadyrov. The Chechen leader has repeatedly noted that his “fellow countryman always helps.”<sup>168</sup>

Since Kadyrov came to power in Chechnya, Surkov has advised him and helped him to establish his own political regime. Kadyrov is believed to be Surkov’s protégé to a large extent. Surkov was the one who convinced Putin to give the current head of Chechnya maximum authority. It was Surkov who conceived of the model for the unconventional relationship between Chechnya and the federal government.<sup>169</sup>

On his Kremlin friend’s advice, Kadyrov has been gradually establishing the vertical of power in the republic in a manner similar to Putin’s, but with the use of tougher methods given the specific nature of the Caucasus. Surkov recommended that Kadyrov publicly swear fealty to Putin in the most flattering words and as often as possible. The official has understood very well the importance of such public displays of loyalty in modern Russia.<sup>170</sup> Surkov, who enjoyed considerable influence in the corridors of federal power, has been defending Chechnya’s political and economic interests before the country’s leadership. Kadyrov called Surkov the most respected Chechen, and in 2010 awarded him with the title of “Honorary Citizen of the Chechen Republic.”<sup>171</sup>

According to Alexei Venediktov, editor-in-chief of Ekho Moskvyy radio, it is Surkov who supports Kadyrov in the latter’s confrontation with federal law-enforcement authorities. Putin is being made to believe that only Surkov can solve the current conflict, which increases his political influence as an intermediary between Chechnya and Moscow officials.

“In my understanding, the key actor is not Kadyrov but the person behind him who is bringing the conflict into the public space to reach his own objectives. This could be Vladislav Surkov, who wants to show Putin that he can resolve the “Kadyrov vs. Federation” conflict. It seems to me that Kadyrov’s latests statements sound like a Moscow project; I feel the hand of a Moscow guy behind it,” Venediktov says.<sup>172</sup>

After Surkov was dismissed from his post of deputy Kremlin chief of staff, he began running into trouble with the law. The Russian Investigative Committee initiated a criminal case over embezzlement in the Skolkovo Foundation. Surkov could have become a key defendant in this case. Thus, in June 2015, State Duma Member Ilya Ponomaryov, who had been put on the international wanted list for complicity in embezzlement, declared that investigators wanted him to testify against Surkov. “Yes, I was openly told: say that Surkov is guilty, and we will leave you alone, say that he paid you,” Ponomaryov claims.<sup>173</sup>

It was then Kadyrov’s turn to show support for his Moscow protector, who had fallen out of favor. As soon as investigators mentioned Surkov’s name in connection with a criminal case, Surkov went straight to Grozny. The head of Chechnya welcomed his guest in informal surroundings, openly called him his “brother” and said that he was prepared to provide Surkov with lodging and employment in Chechnya.

“It is known that Kadyrov has a conflict with the Investigative Committee and the FSB. He turned Chechnya into a sort of legal offshore zone, where he harbors defendants in criminal cases loyal to him from the investigators. Now Surkov is lying low in Grozny, where Kadyrov virtually offered him political asylum,” believes retired FSB Colonel Gennady Gudkov.

Photo: EPA, AP Photo

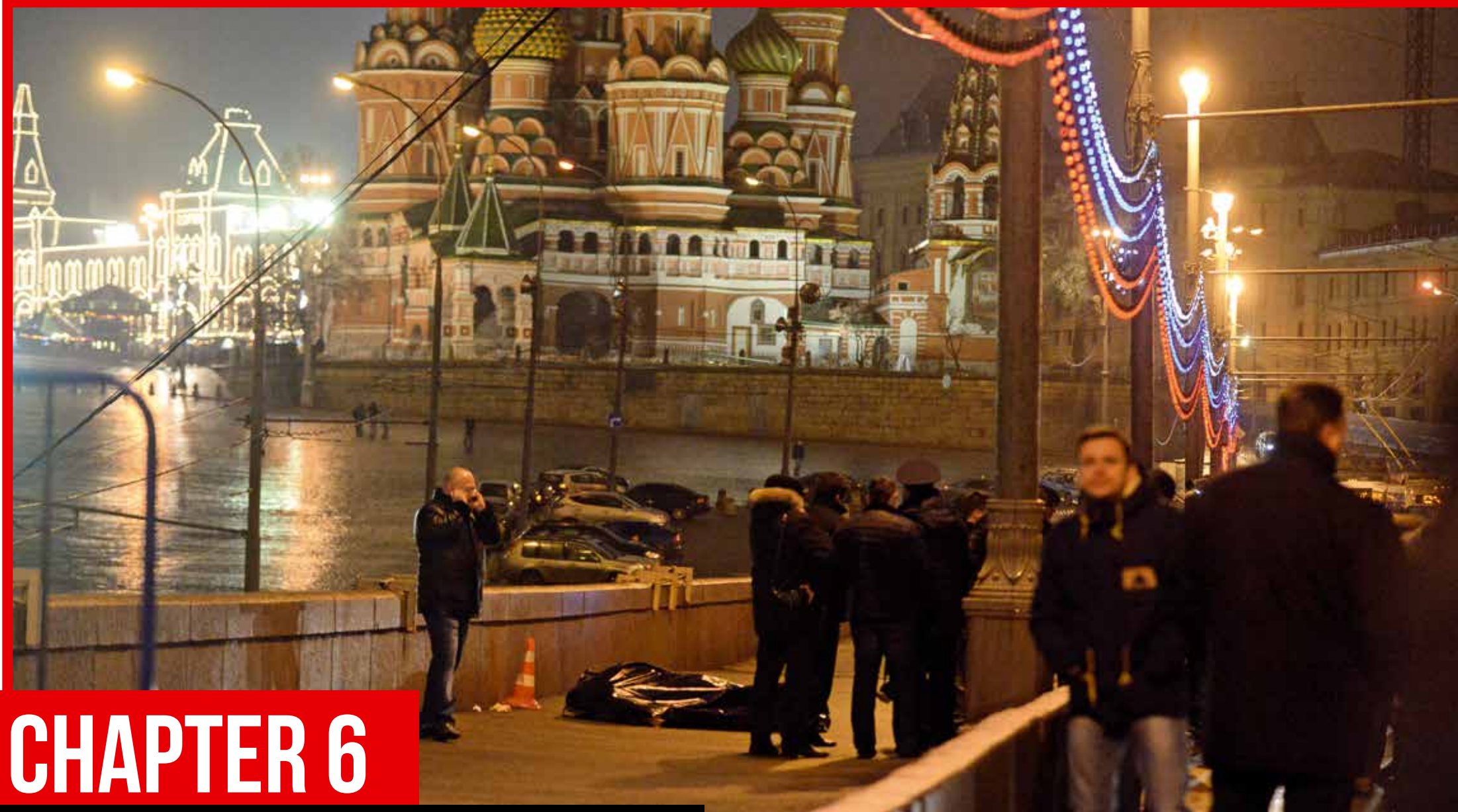


PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN  
AND GENERAL VIKTOR ZOLOTOV



RAMZAN KADYROV  
AND RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL  
AIDE VLADISLAV SURKOV





## CHAPTER 6

# KADYROV'S ENEMIES

ANYONE WHO CRITICIZES RAMZAN KADYROV, AND WHOM CHECHNYA'S PRESIDENT PUBLICLY REFERS TO AS HIS ENEMIES, SYSTEMATICALLY GET KILLED. THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN CARRYING OUT THE RESULTING INVESTIGATIONS ARE USUALLY CONNECTED WITH KADYROV IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

### THE ASSASSINATION OF THE YAMADAYEV BROTHERS

During the First Chechen War, brothers Ruslan and Sulim Yamadayeve fought alongside the separatists. However, on the eve of the Second Chechen War, they switched sides to join the federal forces together with Akhmad Kadyrov.

In 2001 and 2002, Ruslan Yamadayeve was the military commandant of Chechnya. In 2003, he was elected to the State Duma from the United Russia party. In 2004, he received the Hero of Russia award. Sulim Yamadayeve created Chechnya's Vostok Battalion under the supervision of the Chief Intelligence Directorate (GRU), which fought alongside Russian security forces against the "Wahhabis." In 2005, he was promoted to the rank of colonel and awarded the Hero of Russia Star.

Photo: EPA, AP Photo, AFP Photo

As Ramzan Kadyrov's position was strengthening, his frustration grew with regard to the Yamadayeve brothers, who were maintaining their independence and who disposed of an armed resource that was outside the control of the Chechen leader. During the active phase of the power struggle between Kadyrov and Alu Alkhanov, the Yamadayeve brothers gave their full support to Alkhanov.

In April 2008, the conflict between the Yamadayeves and Ramzan Kadyrov reached an acute stage. It was a traffic incident on the Kavkaz federal highway that prompted the confrontation. Vehicles transporting Sulim Yamadayeve's security personnel from the Vostok Battalion failed to yield the right of way to Kadyrov's presidential motorcade: this led to a collision. The incident resulted in a shoot-out.<sup>174</sup> The same day, on Kadyrov's orders, law-enforcement officers loyal to him blocked the main base of the Vostok Battalion in Gudermes. The "Yamadayeves" were ordered to leave the Battalion and to come under Kadyrov's command.<sup>175</sup>

In August, Kadyrov pressured the Russian defense minister into dismissing Sulim Yamadayeve from the army<sup>176</sup>, and in November, the general staff of the Russian Armed Forces took the decision to disband the Vostok Battalion. The Zapad Battalion of the GRU that had also maintained its independence from Kadyrov was disbanded as well.<sup>177</sup>



HERO OF RUSSIA RUSLAN YAMADAYEV, WHO WAS SHOT DEAD IN MOSCOW.



In August 2008, the Chechen directorate of the Russian Investigative Committee controlled by Kadyrov initiated a criminal case against Sulim Yamadayeve and placed him on the federal wanted list. The Chechen leader publicly called Sulim Yamadayeve a criminal and accused him of involvement in grave offenses, such as kidnappings.<sup>178</sup>

One month later, Sulim Yamadayeve's brother Ruslan Yamadayeve was shot dead in Moscow. He had been known as the mastermind behind the opposition to Kadyrov. On September 24, 2008, he was returning from the presidential administration, where he had had a meeting with Deputy Kremlin Chief-of-Staff Vladislav Surkov. During the meeting, the problem of lawlessness in Chechnya was discussed.<sup>179</sup> According to the Kommersant newspaper, the Kremlin saw Ruslan Yamadayeve as a potential candidate for the presidency of Chechnya.<sup>180</sup> Yamadayeve was driving back from the presidential administration in his car together with former Chechnya military commandant General Sergey Kizyun, who had also participated in the consultations. When their vehicle stopped at a red light on the Smolenskaya Naberezhnaya, an unidentified attacker walked up to the car and fired a pistol around 20 times. Yamadayeve died on the spot as a result of his wounds. General Kizyun was taken to hospital with serious injuries.<sup>181</sup>





ADAM DELIMKHANOV ON INTERPOL'S INTERNATIONAL WANTED LIST

According to Isa Yamadayev, a brother of the deceased, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov was behind this crime, and State Duma Member Adam Delimkhanov, who “manages executions and kidnappings there,” was the organizer of the assassination.<sup>182</sup> Fearing for his life, Sulim Yamadayev left Russia after his brother’s murder, and settled in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Soon after that, both Sulim and Isa Yamadayev found themselves at the gunpoint of a killer.

On March 28, 2009, an assassination attempt was made on Sulim Yamadayev’s life. A UAE police officer testified that Yamadayev had been “killed on the spot by a pistol shot to the back of the head in the presence of his two bodyguards.”<sup>183</sup>

Two people were convicted as a result of the murder investigation in the UAE. One of them was an Iranian, Makhdi Lorniya, Ramzan Kadyrov’s former horseman.<sup>184</sup> Dubai police chief Dhahi Khalfan Tamim named Adam Delimkhanov as the organizer of the assassination, and made it clear that he possessed “irrefutable proof of his guilt.”<sup>185</sup> Delimkhanov was soon placed on Interpol’s international wanted list.<sup>186</sup>

In July 2009, an attempt was made on the life of Isa, the third of the Yamadayev brothers. However, this time the assassination attempt failed: the Russian secret services had learned ahead of time about the planned murder, and managed to prevent it.<sup>187</sup> As a result, Isa Yamadayev’s own bodyguard, Khavazha Yusupov, was detained while attempting to carry out the assassination. Yusupov admitted that he had been recruited by Ramzan Kadyrov. The Russian Investigative Committee has in its possession Yusupov’s confession, in which he states that Kadyrov ordered him to assassinate Isa Yamadayev. Yusupov also personally confirmed his involvement in the murder of Ruslan Yamadayev.<sup>188</sup> The video of Yusupov’s interrogation was made public in 2010. Yusupov was later sentenced to 8.5 years in a maximum-security prison.<sup>189</sup>

An extract from the Khavazha Yusupov interrogation transcript:<sup>190</sup>

“We came to Ramzan’s house and sat in a room. First, Ramzan said: “Where have you come from?” – “I have come from Moscow, from Yamadayev’s security service.” “Then do you know who killed Ruslan Yamadayev?” I told them: “They say that Adam Delimkhanov killed him.” He started to laugh. “No, Delimkhanov didn’t kill him—I killed him. It was done on my personal order. I killed him myself, this was my order. And do you know who killed Sulim Yamadayev? ...This was also my order. I am saying this officially. I fired and I killed these people. Ramzan said so.” ...Then he told me: “Do you want to live in safety?” I answered yes. – “Then listen to me, I have a question for you in order to kill Isa Yamadayev.”

Despite all the evidence and testimonies against Ramzan Kadyrov, he has never been charged in any of the criminal cases connected with the attempts on the lives of the Yamadayev brothers. Although three Chechens suspected of organizing the assassination of Ruslan Yamadayev were convicted in October 2010, the mastermind behind the crime has never been officially named.<sup>191</sup> The investigation named Kadyrov’s adviser Shaa Turlayev as the organizer of the attempt on Isa Yamadayev’s life. Although Turlayev was put on the international wanted list, he still lives happily in Chechnya and does not seem to be hiding from anyone.<sup>192</sup>

Why are investigators so tolerant toward Chechnya’s president? “In the context of our regime, Ramzan Kadyrov is an untouchable person who is allowed to do anything he likes,” says a prominent clergyman, Proto deacon Andrey Kurayev.<sup>193</sup>

## THE ASSASSINATION OF ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA

“You have come between Chechens. You are an enemy. You are worse than Basayev,” Ramzan Kadyrov said to Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya in June 2004.<sup>194</sup>

There were actually a number of reasons for Politkovskaya to be on the list of Kadyrov’s enemies, since she created a lot of problems for him. The journalist specialized in writing about Chechnya. She regularly wrote about the detachments of armed Kadyrovites involved in kidnappings, murders, and torture that “have long equaled death squads in their atrocity.” Both Kadyrov himself, who, as Politkovskaya believed, should have been tried for his crimes, and members of his inner circle were key figures in her critical accounts.<sup>195</sup> As a result of her investigative reports, more than 20 criminal cases were initiated in Chechnya, a number of which resulted in actual prison sentences.<sup>196</sup>

JOURNALIST ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA, WHO WAS MURDERED AT HER HOME IN MOSCOW



On October 7, 2006, Anna Politkovskaya was murdered in Moscow. The killer was waiting for her near her apartment building. He followed her in and killed her with four shots fired at close range.<sup>197</sup>

Two days before her assassination, on the day of Kadyrov’s 30th birthday, Politkovskaya gave an interview to Radio Liberty. She called Kadyrov a “coward armed to the teeth who is surrounded by bodyguards” and mentioned the investigation of kidnappings in which he was involved. The journalist emphasized that her objective was to make sure that a criminal case was opened against Kadyrov, and that he was arrested.<sup>198</sup>

Her colleagues from Novaya Gazeta gave more details about Politkovskaya’s last investigation. Soon after her assassination, the newspaper published an article and the transcripts of videos found on her computer. The footage showed scenes of torture and the killing of two people. According to journalists, the carnage was carried out by officers of one of Chechnya’s law-enforcement bodies controlled by Kadyrov.<sup>199</sup> Novaya Gazeta officially declared that it believed Kadyrov to be responsible for organizing the assassination attempt on Politkovskaya, and that it was probably motivated by her criticism of the Chechen authorities.<sup>200</sup>

In fact, the murder investigation did lead the detectives to Ramzan Kadyrov’s inner circle. “We know that Kadyrov is aware of who committed the murder,” declared Vyacheslav Izmailov, a Novaya Gazeta correspondent who cooperated with the investigative team in February 2007.<sup>201</sup>

Movladi Baisarov, commander of the Gorets Battalion and Akhmad Kadyrov’s bodyguard, became an important witness in the Anna Politkovskaya murder case. In one of his last interviews, he declared his willingness to testify in the case. “When I was with Akhmad Kadyrov, what she wrote



ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA, JOURNALIST

“KADYROV IS A COWARD WHO IS ARMED TO THE TEETH AND SURROUNDED BY BODYGUARDS.”

was not always convenient for us. But everything she said was true,” Baisarov said. However, Baisarov did not have time to meet with investigators--he was put on the wanted list by law-enforcement authorities loyal to Ramzan Kadyrov and killed in Moscow during his arrest.<sup>202</sup>

In the end, investigators managed to bring six suspects to justice, each of whom received a prison sentence in 2012 and 2014. The court held that a Chechen crime boss, Lom-Ali Gaitukayev, was the organizer of the assassination. He received the order to murder Politkovskaya from an unknown mastermind and enlisted his nephews, the Makhmudov brothers (one of whom actually pulled the trigger), to execute the contract killing, as well as two policemen who provided field support. Gaitukayev, however, refused to name those who had ordered the reprisal against the journalist.<sup>203</sup>

Officially, the search for the mastermind of Anna Politkovskaya’s murder is still underway. A separate criminal case was opened against the person or persons who ordered her killing. In reality, however, law-enforcement officials stopped looking for the mastermind a long time ago. In November 2015, the senior investigator in charge of the investigation into Politkovskaya’s murder, Major-General Petros Garibyan, retired and was replaced by an officer of an inferior rank from the Russian Investigative Committee. “Today, the investigative team has basically ceased to exist. No actions are being taken as part of the investigation, and the criminal case has basically been put on hold,” says Novaya Gazeta press secretary Nadezhda Prusenkova.

Ramzan Kadyrov has never even been questioned in connection with the Politkovskaya murder case.



**"I MET THE CURRENT CHECHEN PRESIDENT RAMZAN KADYROV IN A RATHER NERVOUS ATMOSPHERE. HIS LATE FATHER, AKHMAD KADYROV, INVITED ME TO THE CONGRESS OF THE CHECHEN PEOPLE IN 2002. THE CONSTITUTION OF CHECHNYA WAS BEING DISCUSSED. THE CONTENT OF MY SPEECH WAS BASICALLY THAT HAVING A COLLECTIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WAS IN THE TRADITIONS OF THE CHECHEN PEOPLE. CHECHNYA HAD NEVER HAD A PRESIDENT. IN ORDER TO FOLLOW CHECHEN TRADITIONS, THE PRESIDENTIAL POST SHOULD BE ABOLISHED, AND A PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE FORMED, FOLLOWED BY A GOVERNMENT, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE REACHING OF A CERTAIN COMPROMISE AMONG DIFFERENT GROUPS. WHEN I LEFT THE AUDITORIUM, A MAN WITH PALE EYES APPROACHED ME AND SAID THAT I SHOULD BE KILLED FOR MAKING SUCH STATEMENTS. I ASKED HIM: "WHO ARE YOU?" HE PRODUCED AN ID CARD THAT SAID HE WAS A LIEUTENANT COLONEL OF THE FSB. THIS WAS RAMZAN KADYROV. I CANNOT SAY THAT HE FRIGHTENED ME MUCH BUT I SAW IN HIS EYES THAT HE WAS NOT JOKING — I SAW HATRED IN HIS EYES."**

BORIS NEMTSOV

## THE SHOOTING OF BORIS NEMTSOV

Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov systematically criticized Ramzan Kadyrov's actions, as well as the inaction of law-enforcement bodies against him. The Russian politician repeatedly called directly on secret services to establish order in Chechnya. In May 2014, Boris Nemtsov sent an official request to the director of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) demanding that they look into the publication of a video depicting a large group of Kadyrov's combatants, speaking Chechen, crossing the Russian-Ukrainian border.<sup>204</sup>

Nemtsov held Vladimir Putin personally responsible for "Kadyrov's impunity." "I cannot understand what Putin expects when he arms 20,000 Kadyrovites. Putin diligently finances Chechnya by sending trains loaded with money. Chechnya receives a minimum of 60 billion rubles a year in grants. Only Allah knows how much money is being siphoned off through different programs, such as Northern Caucasus Resorts," Nemtsov wrote in December 2014, two months before his murder.<sup>205</sup>

Kadyrov's reaction to such criticism, addressed to both him and President Putin, was more than frustration. "Those who criticize Putin are savages, they are my personal enemies. As long as Putin supports me, I can do anything, Allahu akbar!" Kadyrov said in an interview for Newsweek magazine.<sup>206</sup>

**THOSE WHO CRITICIZE PUTIN ARE SAVAGES, THEY ARE MY PERSONAL ENEMIES. AS LONG AS PUTIN SUPPORTS ME, I CAN DO ANYTHING, ALLAHU AKBAR!"**

RAMZAN KADYROV

There is a record of a death threat that Kadyrov personally made to Nemtsov. In 2007, the politician wrote about it in his book *Confessions of a Rebel*.<sup>207</sup>

It is worth noting that, at the time, Akhmad Kadyrov also took his son's words seriously. "At the end of the Congress, the elder Kadyrov assigned Nemtsov armed bodyguards, who accompanied the Moscow politician until he left Chechnya," said the journalist Alexander Ryklin, who was accompanying Nemtsov on his trip.

Boris Nemtsov was killed on February 27, 2015, in downtown Moscow near the Kremlin. The killer caught up with him on the Bolshoi Moskvoretsky Bridge and shot him six times in the back. Five bullets hit him. Nemtsov died on the spot.

On March 8, 2015, Zaur Dadayev, deputy commander of Chechnya's Sever (North) Battalion and a number of his henchmen were arrested and charged with murdering Nemtsov. According to the investigation, it was Dadayev who shot him. In 2010, Ramzan Kadyrov had decorated Dadayev with the Order of Courage. Commenting on the gunman's arrest, the Chechen president called him a true patriot of Russia.<sup>208</sup>

During the course of the investigation, it was established that just three days before Nemtsov's murder, Dadayev had arrived in Moscow accompanied by another combatant from the Sever Battalion, Ruslan Geremeyev. The latter is the nephew of Suleyman Geremeyev, a senator from Chechnya in the Federation Council and a politician close to Kadyrov.

Dadayev and Geremeyev shared an apartment, and the day after the murder, they both left Moscow for Nazran on the same flight.<sup>209</sup> Later, the paths of former comrades-in-arms diverged. Dadayev stayed in Ingushetia, where he was later detained by an FSB SWAT team, and Geremeyev managed to reach Chechnya. He spent the following weeks hiding from justice in the Chechen village of Dzhalka. This is the Delimkhanovs' home village. Alibek Delimkhanov is the commander of the Sever Battalion. Dadayev and Geremeyev served under his command. Adam Delimkhanov, a State

OPPOSITION LEADER BORIS NEMTSOV SHOT DEAD OUTSIDE THE KREMLIN WALLS



KADYROVITE ZAUR DADAYEV,  
WHO WAS ARRESTED ON  
SUSPICION OF KILLING NEMTSOV

Duma member and Kadyrov's right-hand man, was earlier involved in the killing of the Yamadayev brothers. Russian investigators' attempts at getting to the village of Dzhalka to interrogate Geremeyev failed: Chechen law-enforcement forces blocked the road to the village.<sup>210</sup>

Geremeyev's trace soon vanished. According to one version of events, he left Russia with a fake passport.<sup>211</sup> According to another version, he still is lying low somewhere in Chechnya under Kadyrov's protection.<sup>212</sup> The Russian Investigative Committee put Geremeyev on the so-called operative search list. If arrested, he will probably be charged with involvement in the murder.<sup>213</sup> According to investigators, the man behind the murder is Ruslan Mukhudinov, yet another officer in Chechnya's Sever Battalion and Geremeyev's driver, whose role in the group of killers was that of an intermediary who dealt with guns and money. Investigators' attempt at passing one of the members of the crime group for the organizer or mastermind of the killing clearly demonstrates that Moscow law-enforcement officials are unable to trace the investigation back to the real mastermind, who obviously occupies a top position in the government system.

Vadim Prokhorov, a lawyer for Nemtsov's family, has repeatedly demanded that investigators interrogate the Delimkhanov brothers and Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov. "It is clear that the trail of the mastermind of the killing leads to Grozny. The key suspects are people close to the Delimkhanovs and to Kadyrov. However, the investigators' work in the territory of Chechnya is practically paralyzed by the Republic's government," Prokhorov says.

The lawyer's request was not met — this was clearly for political reasons. The idea of having Chechnya's president interrogated provoked frustration in the Kremlin and resulted in pressure being applied on Nemtsov's family. In July 2015, Zhanna Nemtsova, the daughter of the murdered Russian opposition leader, declared that she was being prompted to decline the services of her attorney, Prokhorov, because of his position with regard to Kadyrov.<sup>214</sup> It soon



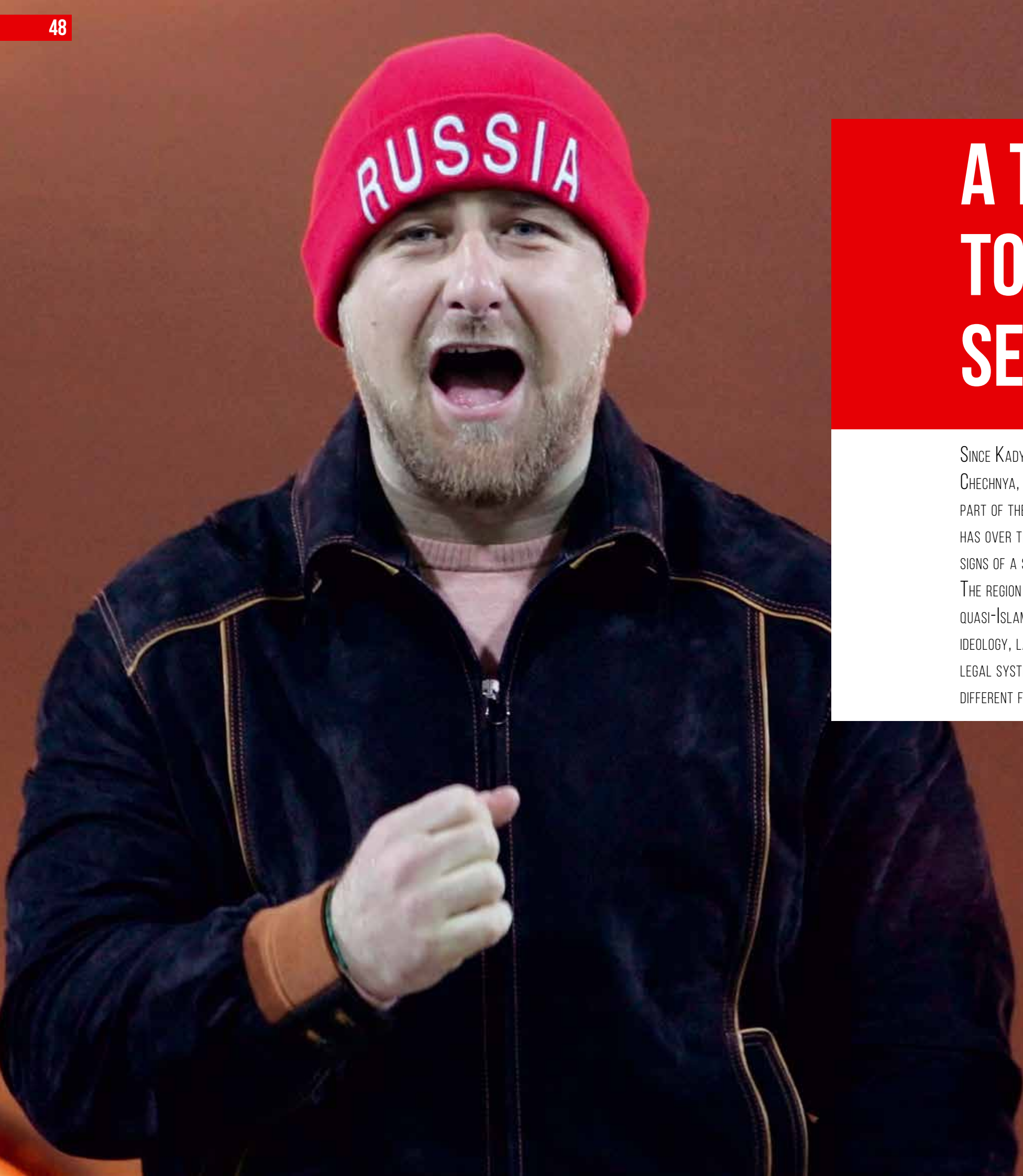
VADIM PROKHOROV,  
A LAWYER FOR NEMTSOV'S  
FAMILY

**"THE TRAIL OF THE MASTERMIND OF THE KILLING LEADS TO GROZNY. THE KEY SUSPECTS ARE PEOPLE CLOSE TO THE DELIMKHANOVS AND TO KADYROV."**

became known that this demand was communicated to Nemtsova by RusNano State Corporation CEO Anatoly Chubais.<sup>215</sup>

Zhanna Nemtsova refused to replace her lawyer, who had been defending her father's interests for many years. However, out of concern for her personal safety, she was forced to emigrate to Germany.





# A THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

## CHAPTER 7

SINCE KADYROV CAME TO POWER, CHECHNYA, WHILE FORMALLY REMAINING PART OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, HAS OVER THE YEARS ACQUIRED NUMEROUS SIGNS OF A SOVEREIGN STATE. THE REGION HAS TURNED INTO A SEPARATE QUASI-ISLAMIC STATE WITH ITS OWN IDEOLOGY, LAW-ENFORCEMENT BODIES, LEGAL SYSTEM AND EVEN ITS OWN POLICY DIFFERENT FROM THE KREMLIN'S ONE.

### INDEPENDENCE AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS

The Republic of Chechnya has its own ideology that is basically obligatory and offers no alternatives. This ideology blends together local nationalism, Kadyrov's cult of personality, and quasi-Islamism. The inculcation of such ideas contradicts the fundamental law of the Russian Federation and violates the constitutional provisions on democracy and the secular character of the Russian state in Chechnya.<sup>216</sup> The Kremlin, however, chooses not to notice this.

The regional army and other law-enforcement structures created in Chechnya are basically independent of the federal authorities. All of the armed units that Ramzan Kadyrov was not able to bring under his command were either abolished or forced out of Chechnya.

Kadyrov is implementing his own foreign policy on the world stage, in parallel to the one carried out by the Russian Foreign Ministry. For example, in Germany, France, Denmark, Austria, Belgium and Poland, Chechnya's independent representative offices operate on an equal basis with Russian embassies.<sup>217</sup> Kadyrov works autonomously with the leaders of Arab countries, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

According to Russian law, the Russian president has the right to remove the head of the Chechen Republic from office. In reality, however, it seems to be impossible to carry out such a decision: With the connivance of the government in Moscow, Kadyrov has consolidated a great deal of power in his hands.





“Kadyrov began talking about certain prerogatives of the Republic... He has been demonstrating his growing authority and, from this position of strength, he is already prepared to make demands of the federal government,” said writer Zakhar Prilepin in 2007. Prilepin served as a squad leader in the riot police force (OMON) in the 1990s and participated in armed hostilities on the territory of Chechnya.<sup>218</sup>

“Chechnya has become an independent state with one exception: the money is Russian. Kadyrov was willing to take responsibility for the problems, but in return he demanded and received immense powers. Consequently, the federal government now depends on Kadyrov. This is an “inside out empire,” a case in which it is not the large country that dictates its own interests but, on the contrary, it is a small colony that holds its parent country by the throat and wheedles as much money out of it as it needs,” says political analyst Dmitry Oreshkin, explaining the current situation in Chechnya.<sup>219</sup>

Despite its formal status as a Russian region, Chechnya is considerably different from other legal subjects of the Russian Federation. Having abandoned the armed struggle for independence, Kadyrov virtually received that independence as a result of his political agreement with Putin.

Kadyrov managed to obtain from Putin almost everything that separatist leaders Dzhokhar Dudayev and Aslan Maskhadov had sought in the 1990s: he did so as the result of a deal, the outcome of which Russian society is yet to realize and evaluate. The only thing Kadyrov did not obtain is formal acknowledgment of Chechnya’s sovereignty. However, it is rather in Kadyrov’s interests for Chechnya to remain part of the Russian Federation: While continuing to strengthen Chechnya’s armed forces and his own authority in the region, Kadyrov receives generous grants from the federal budget.

“Kadyrov annually wheedles funds comparable with [those needed for] the construction of a hydropower station, such as the Bureisk hydropower plant. Every year we give away one such Bureisk hydropower plant to Kadyrov to maintain the semblance of order. Moreover, we call it constitutional order, although everyone understands that not one Russian citizen who comes to Chechnya can count on his constitutional rights being respected. One can only count on either the support or the displeasure of Kadyrov. Everything is decided according to his personal arbitrary rule. Otherwise, Kadyrov would just cut loose and chart his own separatist course, appropriate the 2 million tons of oil that is being pumped out of his land, and declare himself independent, with the support of the Islamic world” Oreshkin said.<sup>220</sup>



DMITRY ORESHKIN,  
POLITICAL ANALYST

**“THE FEDERAL CENTER DEPENDS ON KADYROV. THIS IS AN INSIDE OUT EMPIRE... IT IS NOT THE LARGE COUNTRY THAT DICTATES ITS OWN INTERESTS BUT, ON THE CONTRARY, A SMALL COLONY THAT HOLDS ITS PARENT COUNTRY BY THE THROAT AND WHEELLES AS MUCH MONEY OUT OF IT AS IT NEEDS”**

“The federal government essentially lost the Second Chechen War. A pact with Kadyrov was made under the guise of victory, and the money that is flowing into Chechnya today can be seen as indemnities that are being paid for Russia losing the war,” said Sergey Mitrokhin, a member of the Political Committee of the Yabloko party.<sup>221</sup>

## “SHOOT TO KILL”

In April 2015, Ramzan Kadyrov made a statement that can be seen as a declaration of Chechnya’s independence. Speaking before representatives of local law-enforcement bodies, he ordered them to “shoot to kill” any law-enforcement officers from other regions should they attempt to operate on the territory of Chechnya without permission from the local authorities. This statement was provoked by an operation carried out in Grozny by Stavropol policemen, during which a Chechen, who had previously been put on the federal wanted list, was killed while trying to resist arrest by shooting back.<sup>222</sup>

Kadyrov expressed his indignation at the fact that he had not been informed about the operation in Grozny ahead of time. “I did not know. Nothing of the sort will happen on our territory. Those who think otherwise are wrong. We paid a heavy price for peace and order. We should be reckoned with. That is enough. We were being humiliated, insulted. We did not adopt the Constitution for that,” Kadyrov declared.<sup>223</sup>

**“I OFFICIALLY STATE THAT IF [ARMED PEOPLE] TURN UP ON YOUR TERRITORY WITHOUT YOUR KNOWING ABOUT THIS — BE THEY MUSCOVITES OR STAVROPOL NATIVES — SHOOT TO KILL.”**

RAMZAN KADYROV

“I officially state that if [armed people] turn up on your territory without your knowing about this—be they Muscovites or Stavropol natives—shoot to kill,” Kadyrov ordered Chechen law-enforcement officials.<sup>224</sup>

Despite Kadyrov’s indignation, carrying out armed operations in the territories of Russian regions is a routine practice for the country’s law-enforcement bodies and secret services. For example, in June 2013, FSB operatives detained Makhachkala Mayor Said Amirov on suspicion of plotting a murder. In March 2015, Moscow law-enforcement officers arrested Sakhalin Governor Alexander Khoroshavin, who was charged with corruption. In September 2015, police arrested the governor of the Komi Republic. According to the investigation, he turned out to be a leader of a criminal organization. All three abovementioned officials were brought to Moscow and were put in pretrial detention.



Photo: AP Photo, Dmitry Azarov/Kommersant



**“THIS STATEMENT BY KADYROV SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING: RUSSIA SHOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT CHECHNYA, WHILE THEY CONTINUE TO DO WHATEVER THEY WANT OVER THERE.”**

ALEXANDER OSTROVSKY, LAWYER

It is difficult to imagine that other regional leaders would take the liberty to threaten law-enforcement officials the way Kadyrov does.

In fact, through this statement, Chechnya’s president put himself above Russian law, making it clear that no criminal case against him has any chance of reaching the court. Kadyrov’s statement means that even if a decision is taken to arrest him for any crime, he has enough influence to prevent such a decision from being carried out.

The extremely mild reaction of the federal authorities to Kadyrov’s provocative rhetoric only strengthens the Chechen president’s confidence in his own impunity.

According to the lawyer Marina Andreyeva, Kadyrov’s order to shoot at police officers contains an incitement to commit a crime under Article 317 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (“Infringement on the life of a law-enforcement official”).

“As the head of the republic, in making such statements during an official meeting of the heads of law-enforcement agencies, Kadyrov was instigating his subordinates to commit a crime on account of his position, his authority and Chechnya’s traditions,” Andreyeva said.

However, this statement had no consequences for Kadyrov. President Putin chose to disregard the Chechen leader’s speech. Putin’s press secretary, Dmitri Peskov, refused to make any comment.<sup>225</sup> Moreover, Russia’s Interior Ministry took an excusatory attitude and noted that police officers who made Kadyrov angry had after all informed their Chechen colleagues about the upcoming operation. Kadyrov’s statement has never resulted in an investigation: The Interior Ministry confined itself to a careful phrase about the inadmissibility of calls to shoot police officers coming from the Republic’s government.<sup>226</sup>

“This statement by Kadyrov suggests the following: Russia should continue to support Chechnya, while they continue to do whatever they want over there,” said lawyer Alexander Ostrovsky. “Basically, having assumed supreme power in the Chechen Republic, Kadyrov has forgotten that this region is a part of Russia,” lawyer Oleg Khabibrakhmanov agreed. In his view, such public statements pose a threat to the Russian Federation as a unified state.<sup>227</sup>

It is worth mentioning that Kadyrov addresses his threats not only to law-enforcement officials, but also to Russian judges and prosecutors.

Thus, in September 2015, the book *Prayer (Dua) to God: Its purpose and place in Islam* was labeled as extremist. This ruling was made by a court in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk and was prompted by the request of the local prosecutor’s office. According to the court, the book containing quotes from the Qur’an carried a hidden call for aggression against representatives of other religions beside Islam.<sup>228</sup>

The court’s decision sent Kadyrov into a rage. He publicly referred to Prosecutor Tatiana Bilobrovets and Judge Natalia Perchenko as shaitans and national traitors, accused them of trying to “blow up the situation in the country,” and

Photo: AP Photo



demanding “harsh punishment” for them. “If they are not handled in a proper legal way, I will personally call them to account, because there is nothing in this life above the Qur’an for me,” Kadyrov emphasized.<sup>229</sup>

The head of Chechnya has once again avoided criminal liability: The Prosecutor-General’s Office of the Russian Federation confined itself to a polite request addressed to Kadyrov to “solve his problems within legal boundaries” and to refrain from threatening representatives of state prosecution and judicial authorities.<sup>230</sup> Vladimir Putin, on the contrary, expressed his solidarity with his protege. One month after the incident, the Russian president introduced a bill to Parliament that forbids checking quotes from the Qur’an for extremism.<sup>231</sup>

“If any other mere mortal not enjoying this kind of support were to pronounce such words, FSB [operatives] would already be swarming his residence,” the lawyer Alexander Ostrovsky commented on Kadyrov’s statement.<sup>232</sup> Criminal cases from the last few years in Russia prove this point. For example, in August 2015, a criminal case was initiated against Yury Bogomolov, head of the Ryazan branch of the RPR-Parnas opposition party, under Article 319 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (“Insulting a representative of authority”). The only thing Bogomolov did was write a post on a social network, in which he referred to the judges who had fined him for an unauthorized picket as “people without honor.”<sup>233</sup>

## GUARANTEED IMPUNITY

It is worth noting that even in the early stages of his political career, Kadyrov was already behaving provocatively with regard to the federal authorities and secret services. For instance, in May 2007, after FSB officers had refused to let Kadyrov’s numerous bodyguards enter the building of the Chechen directorate of the Federal Security Service, all entrances to the building were welded shut. The blockade was lifted only after the then-director of the FSB, Nikolay Patrushev, personally intervened.<sup>234</sup> Such is the Chechen president’s political style: impudence, disregard for the law, and complete confidence in his own impunity.

But why does Kadyrov get away with everything?

By conferring special powers on the territory of Chechnya upon Kadyrov, Vladimir Putin has essentially made himself and all of Russian society hostages of this man. Seeking to end the war in the North Caucasus, Russia’s head of state found a solution that led to the formation of a regional political regime within the country that basically dictates its terms to the federal government. Both Kadyrov’s demands and his tone are becoming increasingly aggressive with each passing year.

In fact, Putin’s solution to the Caucasus problem comes down to shifting the responsibility for the confrontation between separatists and radical Islamists in Chechnya onto the Chechens themselves, with Kadyrov at the helm. The role of the federal government is limited to providing resources and support for the Chechen political regime.

Quite aware of his exceptional role in the North Caucasus, Kadyrov has gradually eliminated all alternative figures who could replace him as the head of the Republic. By increasing his political and military capital, the head

of Chechnya basically transformed himself from a merely regional leader into a figure capable of speaking to Putin on equal terms, and of disregarding the authority of any governmental body in Russia, with the exception of the president.

Under the current political circumstances, it is practically impossible either to change or even simply to limit Kadyrov’s regime. In fact, enormous financial possibilities and autonomous armed resources make the head of Chechnya an independent figure who possesses powerful maneuvering capabilities. In the case of a political crisis on the territory of Russia, Kadyrov could use his resources to engage in a power struggle on the federal level, or he could declare Chechnya’s independence and secede from Russia, while seizing some of the neighboring territories.

**“THE VERY EXISTENCE OF SUCH A CHECHNYA AND SUCH A KADYROV SIGNALS DEFIANCE OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM. HE SEEMS TO FEEL CRAMPED WITHIN ONE REGION, AND HE OBVIOUSLY ASPIRES TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ENTIRE CAUCASUS REGION AT THE LEAST.”**

IRINA STARODUBROVSKAYA, REGIONAL STUDIES EXPERT AT THE GAIDAR INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC POLICY

“It is obvious that the very existence of such a Chechnya and such a Kadyrov signals defiance of the current system. He seems to feel cramped within one region, and he obviously aspires to the leadership of the entire Caucasus region at the least,” commented Irina Starodubrovskaya, regional studies expert at the Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy.<sup>235</sup>

Andrey Yepifantsev, a political analyst specialized in Caucasus studies, admits that Chechnya has basically become independent as a result of the Kremlin’s policy. “Inside Chechnya, Chechen ways and rules are being respected,” he says. “They do not betray their own people. There have been incidents in which Chechnya’s representatives committed crimes on the territories of other Russian regions and then fled to Chechnya; once there, they have always been hard to locate. Regional law-enforcement officials never assist and instead they completely sabotage the investigations. The Chechen authorities will not turn them in.” At the same time, Yepifantsev notes that any attempts at reconsidering the relationship between Chechnya and the federal government create risks that could lead to “chaos and armed conflict.”

Thus, by creating the threat of a new war in the Caucasus in the event his appetites and demands are not satisfied, Kadyrov has obtained the de facto right to put himself above Russian law. Today, the head of Chechnya publicly acknowledges the authority of only one person, Vladimir Putin. However, in reality, even the Russian president cannot force his Chechen appointee to obey the “vertical of power,” which Putin believes to be his key achievement.



# CHAPTER 8

## INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

"THE ONLY PLACE IN THE WORLD  
COMMUNITY WHERE TERRORISM HAS  
BEEN DEFEATED IS THE CHECHEN  
REPUBLIC," RAMZAN KADYROV  
DECLARED IN DECEMBER 2014.<sup>237</sup>  
BUT IS THIS REALLY TRUE?



### A BREEDING GROUND FOR ISIS

Kadyrov usually justifies any of his actions that contradict the law through the need to stand up against terrorists. Some of his initiatives sound more than extravagant. For instance, after the November 2015 terror attacks in Paris perpetrated by ISIS militants, he suggested tying terror suspects to unmanned aircraft and dropping them on the heads of their fellow militants.<sup>238</sup> "There is no need for any court hearings," explained the head of Chechnya.<sup>239</sup>

Kadyrov has been consistently cultivating the image of an unrelenting and tough fighter against terrorism. His

region, however, remains an important supplier of militants to international terrorist organizations. At first, Kadyrov claimed that information about Chechens participating in the fighting in Syria was false and had been fabricated.<sup>240</sup> However, it soon became impossible to deny the obvious, and Kadyrov admitted that more than 500 native Chechens have joined radical Islamists in Syria. By the end of 2015, criminal cases had been initiated in Russia against 311 residents of Chechnya who went to fight alongside ISIS militants in Syria.<sup>241</sup>

Terrorists have thus established an open channel, which they use to send Islamic militant recruits from Chechnya to parts of the Middle East controlled by ISIS. These future "jihad warriors" usually reach the Syrian border through

Turkey and Azerbaijan, where they are met by ISIS functionaries who then send them on to special training camps. "Many Chechens go to Azerbaijan – this is a well established shuttle business. They use different excuses to go to Baku, and from there they reach Turkey, and then enter directly into Syria. Young people are being lured there mainly by the idea that a jihad is underway in that country and that a fatwa<sup>242</sup> had been issued by prominent Islamic theologians, and thus they believe that participation in the war in Syria is the direct responsibility of every devout Muslim." Such is the explanation offered by representatives of the Chechen Republic's Interior Ministry.<sup>243</sup>

In 2013, militants from Chechnya and neighboring Caucasian republics formed the separate military unit

Al-Muhajireen in the north of Syria. Abu Abdurahman,<sup>244</sup> an experienced warlord and a native Chechen, headed the unit. The unit grew rapidly through its active recruitment of young militants in the Russian Caucasus, and it soon became one of the most combat-efficient groups of Islamic terrorists.

The Italian journalist Domenico Quirico describes as follows the Chechen militants who he met at their encampment in the Syrian city of Aleppo: "Chechens were the first of the foreign militants to come to Syria with their black Islamist flags. These young people are from Grozny. They are ruthless; they kill without rage, in cold blood, just because they know how. They consider both Syrians and Russians to be their enemies."<sup>245</sup>



## IN 2013, IT BECAME KNOWN THAT THE DAUGHTER OF ASU DUDURKAYEV, HEAD OF THE CHECHEN DIRECTORATE OF THE FEDERAL MIGRATION SERVICE, HAD JOINED THE RANKS OF ISLAMIC TERRORISTS IN SYRIA.

According to the Chechen government, terrorism has been defeated in Chechnya, yet the Republic is providing a mass inflow of personnel into the ranks of ISIS militants. On the one hand, groups of radical Islamists are being reinforced by veterans of the armed hostilities in the North Caucasus, who in the 1990s answered the call of the elder Kadyrov for a jihad against Russia. These militants become high-profile ISIS figures and occupy top positions in the organization's armed forces. On the other hand, there is a mass inflow of young Chechens into Syria: these young people are of the generation that grew up after Ramzan Kadyrov came to power in the republic.

The specific character of Kadyrov's political regime and his commitment to the Islamization of Chechnya, despite the peculiar nature, which often contradicts the traditional norms of Islam, serve as a key reason for the inclination of young Chechens to support Middle Eastern terrorists. However, the idea of prioritizing Islamic traditions over the principles of a secular state that is being enforced by Kadyrov is now bearing fruit. It is important to point out that the head of Chechnya not only advocates for a dominating role of Islam, but often justifies violence driven by religious intolerance.

This policy as chosen by Kadyrov obviously encourages the formation of a young generation of Chechens inclined to support radical Islamic movements. The more passionate and impressionable residents of Chechnya move from words to deeds, and take up arms in order to fight against the "infidels" in the Middle East. This trend has become a real problem for Chechnya. Even the children of Kadyrov's immediate subordinates have joined the ranks of terrorists. For example, in 2013, it became known that the daughter of Asu Dudurkayev, head of the Chechen directorate of the Federal Migration Service, had joined the ranks of Islamic terrorists in Syria.<sup>246</sup>

"Chechens often go to live in ISIS territory, and not only fight [alongside it]. They are fleeing from Kadyrov himself. The road to Europe is closed for such people, and they are forced to seek refuge in Syria," said Novaya Gazeta journalist Yelena Milashina.

"Kadyrov gave the green light for radical Islamists to leave Chechnya. This is how they end up in the ranks of terrorists in the Middle East," according to Yuli Nisnevich, professor at the Higher School of Economics. "This is his conscientious political decision. The head of Chechnya is getting rid of radicals inside Chechnya who could cause him problems. What will happen when they start coming back to Russia is a different matter."



ASU DADARKAYEV, FORMER HEAD OF THE CHECHEN DIRECTORATE OF THE FEDERAL MIGRATION SERVICE

The Russian secret services are also concerned that after receiving combat experience in Syria, Islamists from the Caucasus will come back home to concentrate on organizing terrorist attacks in Russia. "The recruitment of mercenaries is underway. (Several hundred) of our people left the territory of our country to go there. They will return and this, of course, constitutes a big threat," said FSB Deputy Director Sergey Smirnov.<sup>247</sup>

## THE CHECHEN TRAIL IN BOSTON

The majority of Russian politicians condemn terrorist attacks organized by radical Islamists outside Russia. In Kadyrov's case, however, nothing is ever certain: Sometimes he expresses support for terrorists convicted in the West, and even shows solidarity with the motives of Islamic militants.

On April 15, 2013, a large-scale bombing took place in Boston, USA. The attackers detonated two handmade devices during the Boston Marathon, killing three people, including a three-year-old child and injuring 280. Police quickly picked up the trail of the suspected organizers of the bombing, who turned out to be the Chechen brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnayev. During the police operation for their arrest, Tamerlan was shot dead, and Dzhokhar was captured. During the interrogation, Dzhokhar Tsarnayev confessed that the motive behind his brother's and his actions was an effort to "defend Islam."<sup>248</sup>

The investigation identified Tamerlan Tsarnayev, who had been killed in the shootout with the police, as the mastermind of the terrorist attack. He had moved to the United States with his parents, but continued to travel to

Photo: AP Photo

Russia. The last time he visited Chechnya and Dagestan was in 2012, a few months before the bombing.<sup>249</sup> According to the US secret services, while in the North Caucasus, he had been in contact with Islamic extremists.<sup>250</sup> Tsarnayev worked with militants William Plotnikov and Mahmud Mansur Nidal, both of whom were killed shortly thereafter in a raid by Russian forces.<sup>251</sup> The Federal Security Service also knew about the connection between Tsarnayev and radical Islamists: the US authorities declared that the Russian secret services possessed detailed information about the terrorist's intentions, but refused to share it with their US colleagues.<sup>252</sup> Tsarnayev probably planned the Boston bombings during his visit to the North Caucasus. After spending a little more than six months in Russia, he returned to the United States.

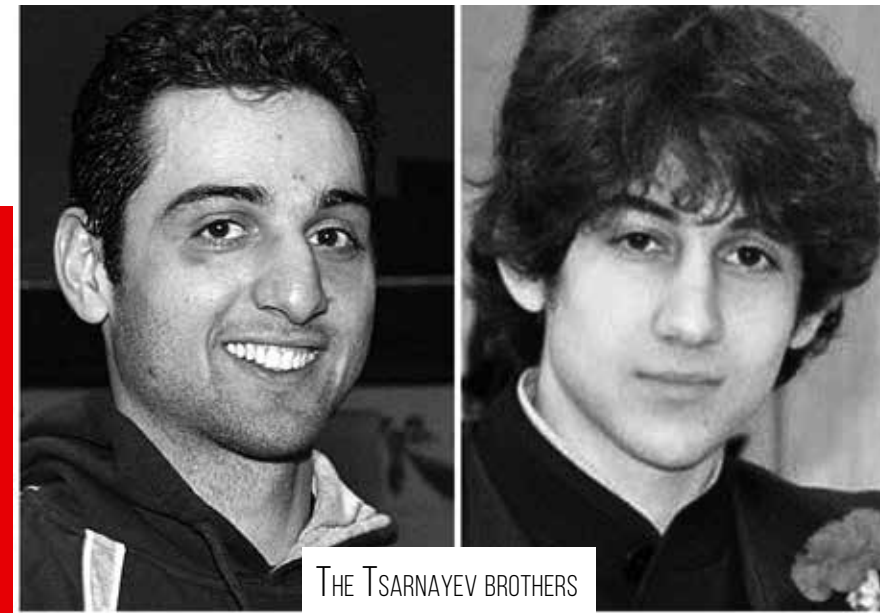
The investigation of the terrorist attack put yet another native Chechen, Ibragim Todashev, a friend of the Tsarnayev brothers, on the FBI's radar. He had moved to the United

States in 2008 in the context of an exchange program, and had decided to settle in Boston. His father, Abdulbaki Todashev, is connected with Kadyrov's inner circle: he worked in the Chechen government and, more recently, in the Grozny administration. After the Boston bombings, Todashev bought a plane ticket and tried to fly to Chechnya. FBI operatives, however, prevented him from leaving the US and went to his place of residence to conduct an official interrogation, during which Todashev attacked an FBI agent and injured him.<sup>253</sup> In response, the law-enforcement officer drew his service gun. The attacker was killed on the spot.<sup>254</sup> According to the US Attorney's Office, the FBI agent's actions were justified.<sup>255</sup>

Two years later, Dzhokhar Tsarnayev, the only Boston terrorist left alive, was sentenced to death by a jury.<sup>256</sup> After the verdict was read, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov publicly came to the defense of the convicted terrorist and expressed his doubt that the Tsarnayev brothers had had anything to do with the organization of the Boston bombings.<sup>257</sup>

From Kadyrov's point of view, the US secret services could have planned the bombings themselves, since it is allegedly impossible to carry out a terrorist attack without their knowing about it. "The US secret services, which were accused of being involved in the Boston tragedy, had to find a victim. Tsarnaev was handed to them as a victim," said the head of Chechnya.

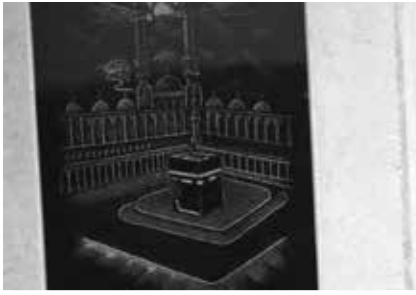
## TERRORIST ATTACK IN BOSTON, 2013



THE TSARNAYEV BROTHERS







THE FATHER OF IBRAGIM TODASHEV, WHO WAS KILLED BY AN FBI AGENT, WITH A PICTURE OF HIS SON

## “WE ARE ALL KOUACHI”

On January 7, 2015, a terrorist attack was carried out at the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris. The Kouachi brothers, radical Islamists, stormed the newspaper's offices armed with machine guns and, with shouts of “Allahu akbar!”, opened fire on employees. Twelve people were killed as a result of the attack. The terrorist attack was provoked by Charlie Hebdo's publication of a cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammed.<sup>258</sup>

The French tragedy united millions of people around the world against religious violence. On January 11, 2015, approximately 2 million people gathered in downtown Paris for a unity march to commemorate the murdered journalists. Together with French President François Hollande, official representatives from dozens of countries, including the leaders of Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Spain, Italy, Mali, the Palestinian Authority, and Poland participated in the march. Russia was represented at the Paris march by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.<sup>259</sup> “We are all Charlie” was the main slogan of the marchers.

However, on January 19, 2015, thousands of people attended a rally in Grozny organized in response to the Paris march. Ramzan Kadyrov personally supervised the preparations for the event. The rally was organized as a protest against the publication of the Muhammad caricatures and as a demonstration of solidarity with the demands of the terrorists who had killed the French journalists.

In his speech before the demonstrators, Kadyrov basically justified the actions of the Kouachi brothers. “If needed, we are ready to die to stop anyone who thinks that you can irresponsibly defile the name of the prophet (may peace be upon him). This should be understood by all

those who unscrupulously ignore the opinion of hundreds of millions of Muslims,” said the head of Chechnya. United Russia member Zakri Mamilov continued Kadyrov's thought by declaring from the stage that the shooting at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in Paris was “not a terrorist attack, but God's punishment.”<sup>260</sup>

While people in Paris carried placards reading “We are all Charlie,” in Grozny one of the rally's slogans read “We are all Kouachi.”<sup>261</sup>

Ramzan Kadyrov's aggressive rhetoric, which verges on the justification of terrorist methods of “defending Islam,” has become a factor in the widespread emergence of jihadists from Chechnya throughout Europe. Thus, in February 2015, a group of Chechens suspected of being involved in terrorist activities was arrested on the outskirts of Toulouse.<sup>262</sup> In May, Polish police detained three natives of Chechnya for organizing a terrorist cell in Eastern Europe.<sup>263</sup> In the summer, several Chechens were arrested in Belgium and charged with recruiting militants for Islamic terrorist organizations.<sup>264</sup>

“We will gradually surround Europe and the West, and we will fight: this is going to be interesting. We will form tribes and we will go for it!” Kadyrov has said ironically. “You have no time to be afraid; if you make time for it, that's it—you are as good as lost. First act, then be afraid. The main thing is to win and to do everything in order to win.”<sup>265</sup>

However, Europeans, like Russians, hardly appreciate such jokes: since the beginning of 2015, the threat from Islamic terrorists has increased considerably. In the fall of 2015, the world was shaken by new large-scale terrorist attacks. A Russian A321 airliner was brought down in Egypt, killing 224 people, and a new terrorist attack took place in Paris, causing the death of 130 people. ISIS has claimed responsibility for both attacks.





# QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

## CHAPTER 9



JUST LIKE PRESIDENT PUTIN, RAMZAN KADYROV HAS CONSISTENTLY DEVELOPED A MACHO POLITICAL IMAGE. HE OFTEN POSES WITH WEAPONS, AND ROUGHLY REPRIMANDS BOTH OFFICIALS AND HIS CRITICS. HOWEVER, KADYROV USUALLY PREFERS TO FLEX HIS MUSCLES IN COMFORTABLE CONDITIONS, IN FRONT OF JOURNALISTS WHO ARE LOYAL TO HIM AND WHO DO NOT ASK DIFFICULT QUESTIONS.

### "MAN TO MAN"

During my work on this report, I publicly offered to meet with Kadyrov to discuss its contents. The head of Chechnya has repeatedly declared that he is always ready to talk to anyone, including investigators, opponents and critics. In early October 2015, he offered to meet with Zhanna Nemtsova, the daughter of the slain politician, who had been asking that investigators interrogate Kadyrov in connection with his possible involvement in her father's murder. Kadyrov declared that he was ready to meet with Zhanna in Grozny, to have tea with her and to answer all her questions.

In December 2015, I sent a letter addressed to Ramzan Kadyrov suggesting he meet with me instead of meeting with Zhanna. Despite the fact that this letter was widely publicized in the media, Kadyrov chose to ignore it. I never received a reply. The following is the text of my letter.

Photo: AP Photo

Ramzan Akhmatovich,  
My name is Ilya Yashin. I am a close friend and colleague of Boris Nemtsov, who was killed in February 2015.  
I am thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances of this crime, and I believe that the trail of the atrocity against my friend leads directly to government offices in Grozny. Moreover, I am certain that the political regime that you have established in the Chechen Republic poses a threat not only to the critics of the current regime, but also to Russia's national security.  
I am currently working on an expert report that examines this problem. As the author, I would like for the final text to be objective.  
In October, when Zhanna Nemtsova demanded that you be interrogated in connection with her father's murder, you invited her to tea. I am willing to come to Grozny, and I suggest we meet. I suggest that we dispense with tea and other such sentimentalities, and that we meet openly and publicly. I have a number of questions that you will certainly not like. I want to ask these questions to your face. Let's talk man-to-man.  
The state-controlled media portray you as a man who is not afraid of straight talk or uncomfortable questions. I hope you will live up to this reputation.  
Waiting for your reply,  
Ilya Yashin

### ELOQUENT SILENCE

My offer to meet with Kadyrov was certainly noticed in Chechnya. For several days, the state-controlled Grozny TV channel aired news reports accompanied by commentaries by experts loyal to Kadyrov, who repeatedly stated that my invitation was nothing but a PR campaign, and that the head of the Republic should not react to it.

"This whole show is just for the sake of free PR! May God keep you safe, Ramzan, from these shaitans, and with great respect for you!" (sic) declared one of the "experts," a biker known as "The Surgeon."<sup>266</sup>

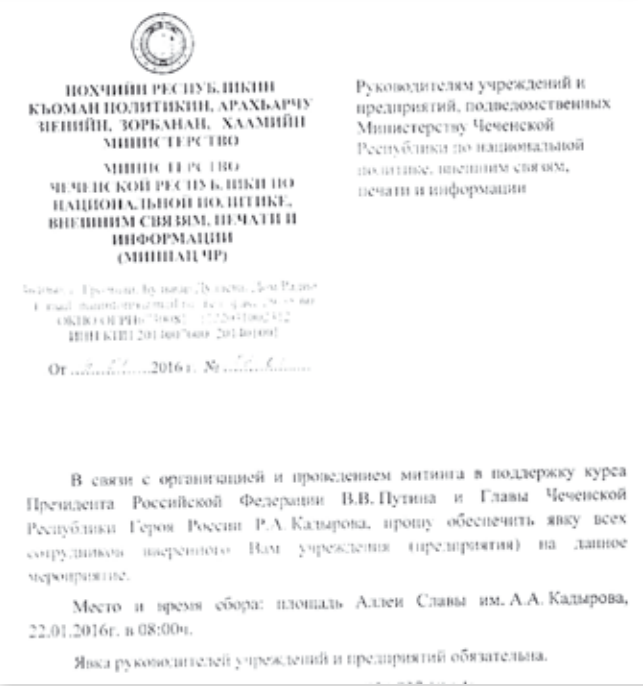
Why did Kadyrov avoid the meeting?

It is easy to demonstrate one's manliness when surrounded by hundreds of bodyguards. It is also easy to send a killer to shoot one's opponent in the back. It is easy to scoff at the daughter of a politician murdered by one's militants, and to invite her over to one's residence for tea.

It is much harder to prove one's manliness in practice. It appears that Kadyrov is ready to meet with a young woman, but when he is invited to a man-to-man talk, he prefers to hide behind his loyal experts and state employees and their banners.

My letter to Kadyrov provoked real hysteria among Chechen officials. First, Kadyrov himself referred to his opponents as enemies of the people. "[Members of] the non-systemic opposition are people who no one has ever heard of before. They are in opposition to Putin. They hold nothing sacred. These people should be treated as enemies of the people, as traitors," declared the head of Chechnya.<sup>267</sup>

His idea was later further developed by key figures in Chechen politics, who proceeded to issue direct threats. Chechen Parliament Speaker Magomed Daudov threatened the opposition with "watchdogs whose claws are itching." State Duma Member Adam Delimkhanov put together a



"list of enemies" and promised to deal with Kadyrov's critics through both "lawful and unlawful means."

The rally against the opposition and in support of Kadyrov that took place in Grozny on January 22, 2016, was the apotheosis of this aggressive rhetoric. Participants "voluntarily" joined this demonstration after receiving government-stamped official requests demanding their presence at the rally. The day of the rally was officially declared a public holiday.

Against a backdrop of slogans, threats and insults addressed to the opposition, my questions have remained unanswered. I do believe, however, that sooner or later Ramzan Kadyrov will have to answer them during his interrogation by the Russian Investigative Committee.



# 20 QUESTIONS

**1.** It is known that in the 1990s, you fought in Chechnya against the Russian army. Furthermore, you were personally acquainted with terrorist leaders. There are pictures of you with Shamil Basayev and Doku Umarov, for example. Would you please comment on these pictures, and talk in more detail about your involvement in the fighting? What orders did you and your father receive from Basayev? How many people did you kill personally?

**2.** You once stated in an interview that you were not even 17 when you first took a machine gun in your hands. This period in Chechnya is known as a time of ethnic cleansing, when the ethnic Russian population was brutally forced out of the republic. Have you personally participated in ethnic cleansing? Do you have blood of civilians on your hands? Whom did you shoot at when you were 17 years' old?

**3.** Do you feel remorse for having fought against Russia?

**4.** When Akhmad Kadyrov died as a result of a terrorist attack, you were working as the head of his security service. Where were you at the time of the murder? Why did your subordinate security guards let the terrorist act happen? Does the fact that it happened suggest a lack of professionalism or treason?

**5.** At various times, you have put forward different versions regarding the identity of the mastermind of Akhmad Kadyrov's murder. For example, you talked about the involvement in this crime of both the separatist Shamil Basayev and Hero of Russia Sulim Yamadayev. Who did kill your father?

**6.** A considerable number of current Chechen combatants are thugs who had fought against Russia and were later granted amnesty through your personal involvement. Why did you not provide them with civilian jobs? Why did you legalize former rebels and then arm them and place them under your command?

**7.** Today, Chechnya is the only legal subject of the Russian Federation that has its own army. In December 2014, you gathered more than 20,000-armed combatants in the Grozny stadium in a peculiar display of power. These combatants publicly demonstrate their loyalty to you personally—not to the Russian state. Why do you need your own army?

**8.** In 2015, you ordered your subordinates to “shoot to kill” at Russian law-enforcement officials operating in the republic without your authorization. Are you aware that your statement constitutes a gross violation of Russian law and brings your right to lead the Republic of Chechnya into question?

**9.** Do you realize that your policy of non-compliance with the Constitution and your violation of Russian laws is a direct path to Chechnya's secession from Russia? Is this your goal? Are you aware of the consequences such a policy will have for your people and you personally? Are you not concerned about the consequences?

**10.** You do not conceal the fact that you live a life of luxury. You often show your collections of expensive watches and luxury cars, your enormous residence and your private zoo. All this is clearly inconsistent with your income declaration. How do you earn your living? What are the actual sources of your income?

**11.** Today, approximately 30 million people in Russia live below the poverty line. You are a state employee living on the taxpayer's dime. Do you not find it immoral to flaunt a luxurious lifestyle that is clearly inconsistent with your official income?

**12.** What are actual sources of income of the Akhmad Kadyrov Foundation? Can you confirm the fact that every Chechen resident is forced to transfer money into the accounts of this Foundation?



RAMZAN KADYROV WITH DOKU UMAROV, A LEADER OF CHECHEN TERRORISTS, AND SHAMIL BASAYEV (IN THE BACKGROUND)

**13.** Your policy in Chechnya is characterized by the opposition of the norms of Islam to Russian laws. Are you aware of the fact that, according to the Constitution, our country—and Chechnya as its integral part—is a secular state? In governing Chechnya, do you give priority to Sharia norms or to Russian law?

**14.** You often emphasize your own religious devotion and your commitment to Islam. However, Islam forbids the glorification of any person. The Qur'an says: “Do not walk proudly on the earth. You cannot cleave the earth, nor can you rival the mountains in height.” How does your cult of personality that is being promoted in Chechnya correspond to the norms of Islam? Don't you regard it as a sin of pride?

**15.** You publicly admitted that Chechnya has become an important contributor to ISIS: hundreds of young Chechens have joined the ranks of terrorists in the Middle East. Do you feel responsible for this? Do you realize that your policy of opposing Islam to Russian laws in Chechnya creates an ideological platform for ISIS recruiters?

**16.** According to Austrian prosecutors, you were probably the mastermind behind the assassination of your former bodyguard, Umar Israilov, who had officially been granted political asylum in Europe. It has been proven that you know the convicted killer, Ruslan Edilov, personally: Pictures showing the two of you together were found on his cell phone. Were you involved in the assassination of Israilov? If not, why did you ignore the subpoena from the Austrian court in 2010, where you could have proven your innocence?

**17.** In 2009, an assassination attempt on the life of Isa Yamadayev failed. According to the testimony of Khavazha Yusupov, who was arrested and later convicted in connection with this case, you personally hired him to kill Isa Yamadayev. Furthermore, during the interrogation, Yusupov stated that in a conversation with him, you admitted to your involvement in the murders of Sulim and Ruslan Yamadayev. Were you really involved in these crimes? If not, how can you explain Yusupov's testimony?



**18.** Zaur Dadayev, deputy commander of Chechnya's Sever Battalion, was arrested in connection with the assassination of Boris Nemtsov. His comrade-in-arms, Ruslan Mukhudinov, is on the wanted list. Investigators have repeatedly tried to interrogate yet another deputy commander of the Sever Battalion, Ruslan

Geremeyev. How can you explain the involvement of your officers in the murder of Boris Nemtsov? Were they acting on their own initiative or following your will?

**19.** Do you know anything about the involvement of Adam and Alibek Delimkhanov in Boris Nemtsov's murder? What about Vladislav Surkov's involvement? And what about the involvement of Viktor Zolotov?

**20.** How can you explain the fact that people who come up against you and who you call your enemies are being murdered one after another?



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A consistent critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin's policy. One of the organizers of the Moscow rallies for fair elections and democratic reforms that gathered many thousands of people.

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Yashin was recognized as a prisoner of conscience after his arrest at an opposition rally in 2011. He won his case against the Russian government in the European Court of Human Rights over his illegal persecution.

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