

Kadyrov Says Private Money Paid for Grozny Bash

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Lavish celebrations for Grozny City Day earlier this month were financed almost entirely by private sponsors, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov said.

"I did not give a single ruble for an artist, actor or the fireworks. I just made it possible for this event to be held," Kadyrov [told](#) Komsomolskaya Pravda in an interview published Friday.

Kadyrov, who had earlier told reporters that the money had come "from Allah," said the event was sponsored by investors, construction firms and "our friends."

The grandiose Oct. 5 party was studded with celebrities, who performed during a lengthy gala in a newly opened high-rise business complex in the Chechen capital, and also included a massive fireworks show.

Among the foreign stars were Hollywood actors Hilary Swank and Jean Claude van Damme, as

well as British musicians Vanessa-Mae and Seal, each of whom reportedly charged \$500,000 to \$1 million for their attendance.

They have drawn fire from human rights activists, who accused them of legitimizing Kadyrov's authoritarian leadership and demanded that all attending stars should return any money or gifts they received.

Swank, who has won two Oscars, made a piecemeal response to the allegations last week.

On Thursday, she [said](#) she "deeply regretted" attending, only to be assailed by the New York-based Human Rights Foundation for "completely sidestepping" the money issue.

On Friday, she backtracked further, when a representative for the actress [told](#) U.S. media that she was donating fees that she had received "to various charitable organizations."

British singer Seal has defended his decision to go, saying he was a musician and wished to be left out of politics, while Vanessa-Mae and van Damme have remained silent.

Actor Sergei Bezrukov, who was among a larger group of national artists attending the celebration, said Friday that he took no money and went there with the sole aim of peace.

"I did not indulge in political details. I was there as an envoy of goodwill," he [said](#) in an interview with the Svobodnaya Pressa news service.

Controversy over the show also reached Germany, where a prominent lawmaker on Sunday lambasted a dancing troupe affiliated to a public television station for attending the gala.

The dancers flattered a dictator responsible for grave human rights violations, said Marieluise Beck, a Bundestag lawmaker for the Green Party, in a [statement](#) on her web site.

Six members of the MDR television ballet, which is partly owned by Leipzig-based public broadcaster Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, took part in a performance by German illusionist Jan Rouven in Grozny, the Bild am Sonntag tabloid newspaper reported Sunday.

The decision to participate was guided more by security than by moral concerns, the report said. "We discussed whether such a trip would be safe enough for our dancers," the ensemble's director Bodo Bergmann told the paper. He refused to disclose how much they were paid.

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