

In a First, European Court Condemns Kadyrov's Police

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The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Chechen police loyal to strongman leader Ramzan Kadyrov kidnapped and murdered a local man more than three years ago, awarding the victim's mother more than \$80,000 in compensation.

The ruling marks the first time the European court has found Chechen authorities guilty of abducting and murdering its own citizens. Rights defenders have long accused Kadyrov's regime of brutally crushing dissent.

According to the Strasbourg court's report, the Russian government failed to properly investigate the disappearance of Abdul-Yazit Askhabov and violated four articles of the European Convention on Human Rights, including the right to freedom from torture.

Tamara Askhabova, the victim's mother, is now set to receive roughly 62,000 euros (\$81,000) as a result of the actions of Chechen police. She appealed to the court in October 2009, two

months after her son disappeared after being seized from his bed by men in uniform.

Oleg Orlov, former head of the Memorial rights group, which along with the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights represented Askhabova in court, said in an e-mailed statement that the Chechen government was known to have widely practiced hostage-taking to cement its power.

"Askhabov's case is not the only example of tyranny perpetrated by local security forces. We see how 'Kadyrov's men,' who have taken key positions in the republic's Interior Ministry, openly flout Russian legal norms, showing utter contempt for the Prosecutor General's Office and Investigative Committee," Orlov said.

Describing the kidnapping of Askhabova's son, the court's case report says three men in masks and military uniforms broke into Askhabova's home in the town of Shali at about 3 a.m. and dragged her son from his bed.

Four other rulings also went against the Russian government on Thursday. Defendants were awarded between 1.5 million euros and 55 million euros over infringements including the right to appeal.

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