

# Russia Urged to Investigate Reports of LGBT+ Crackdown in Chechnya

By [Daria Litvinova for the Thomson Reuters foundation](#)

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**Said Tsarnayev / Reuters**

The European Parliament urged Russia on Tuesday to investigate claims LGBT+ people in Chechnya are being detained and tortured, following reports of a fresh crackdown in the region.

The Russian LGBT Network, a rights group, said this week it had heard reports of "monstrous torture" of detainees in the predominantly Muslim region in recent weeks.

The allegations, which drew a swift denial from the local government, have sparked concern following a widely reported crackdown in Chechnya in 2017 in which more than 100 gay men were rounded up.

"We cannot wait until more people are detained, tortured and killed," said Sophie in't Veld, vice-president of the European Parliament's working group on LGBT+ rights, in a statement.

"It is about time Russia listens to the multiple recommendations and requests from the international community, starts an investigation and puts an end to these human rights violations."

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The Russian LGBT Network said it has evacuated 150 people affected by the crackdown from Chechnya since 2017, but even that was becoming more difficult.

"We have received reports of absolutely monstrous torture," program director Igor Kochetkov told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Monday.

"In addition, the detainees' passports are being ripped up, which makes evacuating them from the region much more difficult. To a certain extent, the situation is much worse now than it was in 2017."

Chechen police did not respond to a Thomson Reuters Foundation request for comment on the latest allegations.

Chechnya's information minister Dzhambulat Umarov dismissed them in an interview with the RBC online news site as "a profound and sophisticated fantasy of the LGBT community".

Chechnya's Moscow-backed president Ramzan Kadyrov has previously denied human rights abuses. His spokesman has said there could be no attacks on gay men because there were no such people in Chechnya.

Same-sex sexual activity is not a crime in Russia, but rights advocates say a law limiting the dissemination of information on LGBT+ issues to young people has created fertile ground for homophobic attacks.

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Last month the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said allegations of arrests and torture of gay men in Chechnya were "credible" and "confirmed" and urged Russia to conduct a proper investigation.

Russia's Novaya Gazeta newspaper, which reported the 2017 crackdown, on Friday reported a fresh round of detentions, citing warnings on social media.

"In Chechnya, they started catching (LGBT+) guys and girls again," read one warning seen by the Thomson Reuters Foundation on a group for gay people on Vkontakte, a popular Russian social media network.

"I'm asking everyone who is still free to take this message seriously and flee from the (Chechen) republic as soon as possible."

Moderators of the group did not respond to a request for comment.

Alexander, a 19-year-old member who asked that his last name not be used for safety reasons, said several people he knew from Chechnya had been detained.

"One of them hasn't been in touch for a month — I don't even know if he's alive," said Alexander, who last year sought asylum in France after receiving murder threats in his home region of North Ossetia.

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