

# Chechen Leader's Inner Circle Being Held, Tortured in Secret Prisons – Novaya Gazeta

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Yelena Afonina / TASS

Senior officials and their relatives in the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya are being held and tortured in secret prisons in the region, the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper [reported](#) Monday.

The crackdown is targeting officials deemed to be showing disrespect and disloyalty toward Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov and his family, Novaya Gazeta reported, citing unnamed sources. Members of Kadyrov's inner circle have reportedly been taken to secret prisons one by one and tortured until they confess their disloyalty.

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The “cleansing” of Kadyrov’s inner circle began with the August imprisonment of Ibragim

Temirbayev, the mayor of the city of Argun, according to Novaya Gazeta. Temirbayev, who held his post for 15 years, has previously been linked to [reports](#) of the torture and imprisonment of LGBT people in Chechnya and was reportedly set to be appointed as an adviser to Kadyrov.

He was reportedly dismissed after a wiretap of his phone calls revealed that he criticized Kadyrov and other Chechen authorities. Terimbayev, along with his relatives and personal security team, were arrested, while his proteges and supporters were fired and his property searched.

Other regional officials who have been sent to these secret prisons include Ruslan Yakhiyev, the head of Chechnya's Emergency Situations Ministry; Dikmagomed Mulayev, the former regional Forestry Minister; Khalid Vaynakhov, the ex-vice premier of social affairs; and Shamkhan Delimkhanov, Kadyrov's brother-in-law, according to Novaya Gazeta.

These members of Kadyrov's inner circle are protected from being killed by their status as public figures, Novaya Gazeta reported, as hiding the deaths of such high-level officials would be impossible.

Kadyrov has ruled Chechnya, a predominantly Muslim region of Russia that was devastated by two bloody separatist conflicts in the 1990s and early 2000s, since he was formally appointed its leader in 2007. Critics have accused him of carving out a state within a state, enforcing a strict Islamic "code of virtue" for women and committing grave human rights abuses, including systemic torture and extrajudicial killings.

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