

# Chechnya: The Inner Abroad

Europe Report N°236 | 30 June 2015

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## *Executive Summary*

Chechnya has made great progress in suppressing insurgency, reconstructing cities and improving its image and official economic indicators. Moscow sees it as a successful model for regions afflicted by deadly violence associated with Islamist insurgency. But stability is deceptive. The leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has used special ties with President Vladimir Putin, more autonomy than other regional leaders and Moscow's near unconditional support to make the republic a virtually independent polity, with its own ideology, religious policy, security structures, economy and laws. Its peace is fragile, a result not only of highly personalised governance reliant on repression and arbitrariness that Moscow tolerates and covers up, but also economic inequality, poor social infrastructure, lack of genuine reconciliation and almost full impunity for abuses. To safeguard Russia and Chechnya against new violent conflict, Putin should rein in Kadyrov by insisting on the republic's better integration with the national state and its laws, more freedom and security for its citizens and accountability for its government.

There has been no authentic political solution to the Chechen conflict, which broke out in 1994, followed by de facto independence (1996-1999), then a second war in 1999 and ongoing insurgency. The political process begun in 2003 installed the formerly separatist Kadyrov family. Many rivals or opponents fled or were killed; local strongmen loyal to the regime took control of federal institutions. Armed separatists were captured and disarmed in mop-up operations, while demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants was achieved by force or by encouraging them to join pro-federal groups that were later merged into the interior ministry and whose largely preserved command chains contribute to local security agencies' extensive autonomy. Reforming these institutions and dismantling such parallel elite structures is essential for any sustainable resolution to the conflict in the long term.

The significant reduction in insurgent activity owes much to widely applied collective responsibility, whereby relatives of rebels have been harassed, threatened, held hostage or had their property destroyed. In recent years, counter-insurgency has been very heavy-handed; soft measures successfully tested in neighbouring Ingushetia are rejected. Chechen nationalism has been gradually superseded among fighters by the ideology of transnational jihadism. Ideological schisms, the drain of fighters to Syria and appeal of Islamic State (IS) ideology have also contributed to the insurgency's defeat. In mid-June 2015, the "amir" of Chechen jihadis swore allegiance to IS, thus completing abandonment of the Chechen cause. However, Chechen-Russian reconciliation has not started, and the wars' root causes remain unaddressed.

A powerful propaganda machine promotes the "success story" of today's Chechnya. Kadyrov, frequently referred to simply as Ramzan, is portrayed as a popular, virtuous leader, with an aura of omnipresent control and invincibility. The official ideology combines Chechen nationalism, devotion to President Putin, Russian patriotism and Sufi Islamism. Nationalism and traditionalism are relied on to create an illusion that the republic offers its people a high degree of self-determination. While trying to eradicate memories of his separatist predecessors, Ramzan provokes tensions by taking over some of their slogans, including territorial claims on neighbouring Ingushetia.

Displaying strong loyalty to President Putin and bringing thousands into the streets for public events, Ramzan has repeatedly said the Russian leader should be in office for life and that he is ready to fight for him wherever asked. In turn, he appears to receive full support and impunity from the federal centre. Ramzan seems to have convinced the Kremlin that only he can control Chechnya, with the result that Moscow is as dependent on him as he is on Putin. The Chechen leader's powerful enemies within the Russian military and security services resent that their government has little leverage over its erstwhile breakaway republic and appear to await an opportunity to bring him down, but little can be expected to come from this unless he displeases the Russian president.

The republic's religious life is the most regulated in Russia. Sufi Islam is part of official ideology, and forced Islamisation has eroded principles of the secular state. At the same time, Chechen authorities are militantly hostile to any form of religious dissent, openly call for the killing of "Wahhabis" and regularly use violence against individuals displaying Salafi symbols.

Chechnya has its own economic regime. Between 2002 and 2012, it was funded directly through two special federal programs that supported reconstruction but were unable to revive production. Now it has its own ambitious plans for economic recovery. Official statistics show steady growth and solutions of social problems. However, locals say the figures are misleading, unemployment remains high, and they suffer from egregious corruption and a parallel system of economic relations reportedly based on extortion and informal taxes and dues.

Though its judicial system mostly complies with the formal criteria, the republic largely functions outside the framework of Russian law. Violence by state agents has reportedly become more targeted, but allegations of grave human rights violations continue. Federal prosecuting agencies are ineffective in dealing with such crimes, due in part to intimidation. Judges are subjected to open, sometimes brutal pressure from Chechen authorities. The European Court of Human Rights has issued almost 300 judgments on Chechnya. Russia implements the portions that deal with compensation, but not their requirements to conduct proper investigations. Security officials instrumentalise application of Chechen traditional law (*adat*). With honour killings, underage marriages and violence against them on the rise, women suffer most from revived traditionalism.

Chechens have no mechanisms available to hold the regime to account. The system functions due to a climate of fear. Collective punishment muffles protest. Not only political rivals, but also intellectuals, journalists and NGO leaders can be subjected to intimidation, humiliation and violence. As the republic drifts further away from Moscow, Russia's own democratic deficit and the related lack of positive political dynamics in Chechnya alienate those Chechens who sincerely want to be part of a modern, secular Russian state.

## *Recommendations*

*To promote long-term political stability and sustainable transformation of the Chechen conflict*

### **To the governments of the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic:**

1. Seek a more sustainable political solution for Chechnya by:
  - a) improving political pluralism, including by encouraging political dialogue with a broad spectrum of moderate Chechen political actors;
  - b) increasing freedoms of expression and assembly and ensuring the ability of independent activists, intellectuals and journalists to operate safely in Chechnya, while discouraging a personality cult around its leader;
  - c) facilitating authentic reconciliation within society and launching a reconciliation process between Chechens and Russians; and
  - d) establishing an independent truth and reconciliation commission to recognise the suffering of victims on all sides of the Chechen conflict.
2. Ensure freedom of religion and separation of religion and state in Chechnya, including by stopping intimidation campaigns against legal religious dissent and ending forced Islamisation.
3. Discourage official actions aimed at stirring up the territorial dispute between Chechnya and Ingushetia.

*To support economic recovery and fight corruption*

### **To the governments of the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic:**

4. Authorise an independent comprehensive inspection of federal funding in the republic and an independent expert evaluation of the feasibility of large investment projects.
5. Investigate alleged extortion and withholding of moneys due to public employees, as well as reported informal double taxation of businesses and practices of hiring “dead souls”, double accounting and inflation of staff numbers and public spending costs; and bring suspected perpetrators to justice, while considering amnesty for economic crimes committed by lower-level officials.

*To strengthen the rule of law*

### **To the governments of the Russian Federation and the Chechen Republic and the Investigative Committee and Office of the Prosecutor General of the Federation:**

6. Improve adherence by law enforcement and security agencies in Chechnya to the Russian constitution and laws, including by ensuring the Chechen interior ministry is under effective federal control; and by better integrating their personnel, purging them of criminal elements and improving professionalism by rule-of-law training and recruitment on the basis of qualifications.

7. Halt collective punishment immediately, transparently investigate such cases, bring suspected perpetrators to justice and rehabilitate victims.
8. Monitor Chechen-language media and prosecute public statements inciting hatred, threatening extrajudicial punishment or limiting rights of certain social groups, including activists and women; and ensure that women in Chechnya enjoy at least the same rights as in the rest of Russia.
9. Investigate cases of enforced disappearance, torture, summary execution and other crimes allegedly committed by security services in Chechnya; and protect judicial independence and respect for judgments by promptly investigating all cases of alleged intimidation or other interference with judges, juries, defence lawyers or investigators.
10. Implement European Court of Human Rights rulings on Chechnya cases fully, including follow-up investigations and steps to prevent future similar violations.

**To the Council of Europe:**

11. The Parliamentary Assembly should engage in dialogue with the Russian government on ways to improve rule of law and advance a sustainable political solution in the republic.
12. The Committee of Ministers should closely monitor and engage the Russian government in dialogue over implementation of European Court of Human Rights rulings on Chechnya cases.

*To support counter-insurgency efforts***To the National Anti-terrorist Committee:**

13. Ensure that only units specifically responsible for such efforts, including counter-terrorism, perform such operations and that command is not exercised by civilian authorities.
14. Encourage use of soft counter-insurgency measures in Chechnya, including a commission for rehabilitation of fighters.

**Brussels, 30 June 2015**

# Chechnya: The Inner Abroad

## I. Introduction

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The head of the Chechen republic, Ramzan Kadyrov (born in 1976), is the youngest and best known leader of a Russian region.<sup>1</sup> A familiar media figure, frequently referred to simply as Ramzan, he has received over three dozen state and non-governmental awards and titles, including Hero of Russia, General-Major of Police and Honoured Defender of Human Rights. In 2014, he was named to the Federal State Council and rated the most popular regional head by internet users.<sup>2</sup>

Under his leadership, Chechnya has been raised from rubble and become one of Russia's most glamorous regions; its capital, Grozny, looks like the prosperous centre of a sovereign state, visited by celebrities and host to interregional, federal and international events. The Kremlin views the impressive reconstruction, suppressed insurgency and functioning institutions as major accomplishments after two decades of war and chaos. Parts of the establishment regard the republic as a conflict resolution model to be replicated.<sup>3</sup> Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev called Chechnya "one of the business cards of Russia", and a "good, unique example in history of combat of terrorism".<sup>4</sup> Meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in February 2015, President Putin said Kyiv should deal with Ukraine's pro-Russian rebels as he dealt with Chechens: "by buying them off with autonomy and money".<sup>5</sup> According to the leader of the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma, "in Chechnya today we have a modern state based on the rule of law, which successfully tackles issues of economic development and social issues".<sup>6</sup>

Yet, Chechnya still produces extremism, with an insurgency that still commits attacks in the republic and radicals who join terrorist networks in Europe and fight in Syria. The numbers of Chechens seeking asylum in Europe are not decreasing, and human security in the republic remains low.<sup>7</sup> Though de jure a part of Russia, it

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<sup>1</sup> See Crisis Group Europe Reports N°s 220, 221, 226, on The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (I), Ethnicity and Conflict; (II), Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-insurgency, both 19 October 2012; and (III), Governance, Elections, Rule of Law, 6 September 2013.

<sup>2</sup> "Р. Кадиров снова 'отличник' рейтинга политической выживаемости губернаторов" ["R. Kadyrov again has 'straight As' in political survivability of governors rating"], 14 October 2013. "Кадиров занял первое место по популярности в интернете" ["Kadyrov the most popular on internet"], *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 27 November 2014. The magazine *Birzhevoy lider* did the rating, based importantly on cites on the internet and the Russian research system Yandex.

<sup>3</sup> "Вестник Национального Антитеррористического Комитета, 2/2010" ["National Anti-terrorist Committee's bulletin, 2/2010"], 2010.

<sup>4</sup> "Кадиров: Медведев назвал Чечню визитной карточкой России" ["Kadyrov: Medvedev called Chechnya 'business card of Russia'"]. *Yuga.ru*, 6 November 2014. "Дмитрий Медведев считает возможным проведение антитеррористического форума в Чечне" ["Dmitry Medvedev finds it possible to hold anti-terrorist forum in Chechnya"], *Regnum*, 24 December 2014.

<sup>5</sup> "Battle for Ukraine: How the West lost Putin", *Financial Times*, 2 February 2015.

<sup>6</sup> "Dmitry Medvedev finds it possible", *Regnum*, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Russia in 2013 was the second highest exporter of asylum seekers to Europe, after Syria. German authorities say 80 per cent of Russians fleeing to their country are from Chechnya. "Annual Report Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2013", European Asylum Support Office, July 2014.

is de facto virtually independent, with its own ideology, religious policy, parallel economy, taxes and laws. Ramzan enjoys special relations with Putin; while the Kremlin has created the system and supports it, it has limited control over what happens in this part of Russia.

The regime is the result of heavy-handed consolidation of power and counter-insurgency measures made possible by wars that left society broken. Chechen history is marked by Russian colonisation and struggle against subjugation, as well as deportation of the entire population to Kazakhstan in 1944.<sup>8</sup> In 1991, led by Soviet General Dzhokhar Dudayev, the nationalist movement tried for independence. After three years of negotiations, Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent in troops. That war left at least 50,000 civilians dead and displaced hundreds of thousands, while 5,334 Russian soldiers were killed or declared missing.<sup>9</sup> The 1996 Khasavyurt accords ended the war, and Russian troops withdrew, but the republic's status remained unresolved, so many field commanders did not disband their paramilitary groups.<sup>10</sup>

Aslan Maskhadov, a moderate and initially secular politician, won the presidential election in Chechnya in 1997 but was unable to control field commanders, with whose groups criminal elements often merged.<sup>11</sup> He tried to accommodate his many rivals and was unwilling to use force against them, resulting in a failed state and flourishing criminality. Islamisation became prominent already by the end of the war as the society's response to routine violent death and acute insecurity.<sup>12</sup> Foreign jihadis and radical clerics from Dagestan flocked to Chechnya trying to influence field commanders and politicians and move Chechnya from separatism to jihad.

Numerous local groups started to use Islam and Islamist ideology to challenge Maskhadov, who compromised by introducing full Sharia (Islamic law) in February 1999. Akhmat Kadyrov, a Sufi leader and mufti (and Ramzan's father), strongly opposed Salafism and came to regard Russian military intervention as the only way to defeat fundamentalists.<sup>13</sup> On 30 September 1999, after Chechen armed groups led by Islamist radicals carried out incursions into Dagestan and bombs went off in Russian cities that were initially blamed on the Chechens, Putin sent federal troops into Chechnya, beginning the second war – officially termed a “counter-terrorism operation”.<sup>14</sup>

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“Кадиров: Запад – это злая мачеха для простых людей” [“Kadyrov: the West is an evil step-mother for ordinary people”], BBC Russian, 4 April 2014.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Russo-Chechen relations see Crisis Group Report, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (I)*, op. cit., pp. 10-16.

<sup>9</sup> “Дудаев Джохар Мусаевич” [“Dudayev Dzhokhar Musayevich”], Caucasian Knot, 25 June 2007. Alexandr Cherkasov, “Книга чисел. Книга утрат. Книга страшного суда” [“The book of numbers. The book of losses. The book of the Last Judgment”], Polit.ru, 19 February 2004. Olga Trusevich and Aleksandr Cherkasov, “Неизвестный солдат Кавказской войны” [“The Unknown Soldier of the Caucasus War”], Memorial, 1997. Dudayev was among those killed.

<sup>10</sup> Supporters of independence have used the name Chechen Republic Ichkeria since 1994.

<sup>11</sup> “Масхадов Аслан (Халид) Алиевич” [“Maskhadov Aslan (Khalid) Aliyevich”], Caucasian Knot, 28 May 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, “State and violence in Chechnya (1997-1999)”, in Anne Le Huérou, Aude Merlin, Amandine Regamey, Elisabeth Sieca-Kozłowski (eds.), *Chechnya at war and beyond* (New York, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> M. Vatchagaev, “Sufism in Chechnya”, in ibid, pp. 133-152.

<sup>14</sup> “Битва за Дагестан (Чечня) 1999 год” [“Fight for Dagestan (Chechnya) 1999”], Voennaya khronika. The Dagestan attack and later bombs in Buynaksk, Moscow and Volgodonsk (4-16 September 1999) consolidated public opinion behind the war. The bombs killed 307 and injured 1,700. Later investigations found that terrorists from Karachay-Cherkessia and Dagestan prepared them. “Рязань, сентябрь 1999: учения или теракт?” [“Ryazan, September 1999: drill or terrorist at-

Federal troops captured Grozny in February 2000, but the resistance led by Maskhadov went underground, and guerrilla warfare began that continues at low-intensity. Akhmat Kadyrov and several allies sided with Russia. This time there were no negotiations with separatists and no recognition of their cause by Moscow; instead a “Chechenisation” policy was pursued from 2003, resulting in instalment of the Kadyrov family in power. Central to this was a 2003 constitutional referendum that decided Chechnya’s status in favour of Russia, but in a climate of open conflict, reported mass fraud, intimidation and fear.<sup>15</sup> Based on this constitution, Akhmat Kadyrov was “elected” the republic’s president in October, though independent observers strongly questioned the results.<sup>16</sup> The November 2007 parliamentary elections completed the political process. No reconciliation has been launched. Internally displaced Chechens mostly returned, but Russian-speakers and Ingush who had fled overwhelmingly stayed in their new locations.

The Kadyrov family established a highly-personalised, authoritarian regime. Security improved significantly.<sup>17</sup> The price, however, has been the emergence of a polity in which Russia’s laws and constitution have limited application and that is run by Ramzan as his own fiefdom.

In recent years, it has been difficult to get independent information from Chechnya, where fieldwork is an enormous challenge due to the climate of fear. Russian media and analysts largely avoid critical writing about the republic, and foreign journalists rarely cover it. This report, for which most extensive fieldwork was done in February-March 2014 in Chechnya and subsequently in Moscow, Dagestan and Ingushetia, aims to fill the gap.

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tack?], Politcom.ru, 11 September 2002. “Контртеррористическая операция в Чечне 1999-2009 гг. Справка” [“Counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya in 1999-2009. Information”], RIA Novosti, 26 March 2009.

<sup>15</sup> According to its constitution, the Chechen Republic (Нохчийн Республика) is a democratic state within the Russian Federation and based on rule of law. The territory of the Chechen Republic is an indivisible part of the territory of the Russian Federation. Officially 95 per cent of the electorate voted in the referendum, with 95 per cent approving. Turnout was reportedly much inflated and results falsified. Neither the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) nor the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recognised the results. “In a Climate of Fear: Political Process and Parliamentary Elections in Chechnya”, Memorial, Centre “Demos”, International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid; Alexey Malashenko, “Рамзан Кадыров: Российский политик кавказской национальности” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: A Russian politician of Caucasian nationality”], Moscow, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> In 2014, Chechnya had 117 dead and injured from armed conflict and was much calmer than Dagestan, which had casualties. “Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе за 2014 год по данным Кавказского Узла” [“Infographics: Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus in 2014 according the Caucasian Knot’s data”], Caucasian Knot, 31 January 2015.

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## II. The Rise of Ramzan Kadyrov

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Establishing full control over Chechnya was a gradual process for the Kadyrovs. By 2004, security functions had been mostly transferred to local pro-federal Chechen paramilitary groups that controlled specific areas. To secure its position, the family had to become the sole centre of power.

### A. *The Kadyrovtsy*

The Security Service of Akhmat Kadyrov (“SB”), usually referred to as the “kadyrovtsy”, was created as a personal security guard but became a powerful paramilitary that functioned as a private army, with units in many settlements. Led by Ramzan, these were legalised in 2004 as interior ministry units, which provided the basis for financing and supplying them with arms.<sup>18</sup> The second regiment of the patrol service (PPS-2), named after Akhmat and consisting of 1,125 men, was created a year earlier, as was the “Oil Regiment” (1,500 to 2,000 men). In 2004, an “Anti-terrorist Centre” (ATC) was created that also functioned as a paramilitary entity. In 2006, battalions “North” and “South” were formed largely from its personnel, also under Ramzan’s patronage and officially part of the 46th operative brigade of the North Caucasus regional command of the Russian interior ministry.<sup>19</sup> These units are controlled by Ramzan through loyal commanders and operate against insurgents, though formally the PPS-2 and “Oil” regiments are unrelated to counter-insurgency.<sup>20</sup> Ramzan often personally commands operations.<sup>21</sup>

The SB core initially consisted of Kadyrov relatives and co-villagers, many of whom fought against the federal army in the first war. Later many former insurgents were coerced or persuaded to switch sides and join it. This was made possible by formal amnesties, announced by Moscow and informal ones guaranteed by Akhmat. Some groups surrendered voluntarily, but human rights groups have documented that captured rebels were often tortured in illegal prisons until they joined.<sup>22</sup> Frequently, relatives of insurgents were held as hostages to persuade surrender, as with ex-insurgent “Defence Minister” Magomed Khambiev.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “In a Climate of Fear”, op. cit.; “The Situation in the North Caucasus: November 2006 – May 2007: Apotheosis of ‘Chechenisation’”, Memorial, 2007.

<sup>19</sup> “Первые новобранцы приняли воинскую присягу” [“First recruits took military oath”], website of the head and government of the republic, 8 August 2010; “Они из батальона ‘Юр’” [“They are from the ‘South’ battalion”], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 January 2010.

<sup>20</sup> “Widespread torture in the Chechen Republic”, Human Rights Watch (HRW), 13 November 2006. “In a Climate of Fear”, op. cit.; “The Situation in the North Caucasus”, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> “Кадыров руководит спецоперацией против боевиков” [“Ramzan Kadyrov is commanding a special operation against insurgents”], Pravda.ru, 24 September 2010; “Кадыров руководил спецоперацией, в ходе которой уничтожен главарь боевиков” [“Kadyrov commanded a special operation, during which an insurgent leader was killed”], Argumenti.ru, 1 January 2015.

<sup>22</sup> “In a Climate of Fear”, op. cit.; “Пытки в Чечне: ‘стабилизации’ кошмара” [“Torture in Chechnya: ‘stabilisation’ of horror”], Memorial, FIDH, November 2006; “Widespread torture”, op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> Khambiev surrendered after 40 to 200 of his relatives were taken hostage in February 2004 and subjected to violence. “Почему сдался Магомед Хамбиев” [“Why did Magomed Khambiev surrender”], Polit.ru, 11 March 2004; “Я стал предателем” [“I have become a traitor”], *Kommersant*, 19 March 2004. “Чечня 2004: ‘Новые’ методы ‘контртеррора’. Захват заложников и репрессивные действия в отношении родственников предполагаемых комбатантов” [“Chechnya, 2004: ‘New’ counter-terrorism methods. Hostage-taking and repressive actions against relatives of alleged militants”], Memorial, 17 March 2005.

Akhmat Kadyrov was assassinated on 9 May 2004. The same day Putin received the grieving Ramzan in the Kremlin. The next day Ramzan, too young under a constitutional age restriction to be his father's successor, was made the republic's vice premier, with Alu Alkhanov as president.<sup>24</sup> However, Ramzan was the actual boss, and when he turned 30, Alkhanov resigned and was moved to Moscow as a deputy justice minister. Upon Putin's suggestion, the Chechen parliament officially made Ramzan president on 2 March 2007.

Since then Ramzan has overseen a remarkable reconstruction. The BBC cited Grozny in 2003 as the world's most destroyed city.<sup>25</sup> Within a few years, it was lavishly renovated.<sup>26</sup> Major reconstruction has also affected other cities, especially Gudermes and Argun.<sup>27</sup> Hundreds of apartment buildings, tens of government buildings, dozens of mosques, roads, gas and electricity networks, skyscrapers, five-star hotels, parks and fountains, entertainment and sports centres and shopping malls have been built.<sup>28</sup> Republic propaganda links all to Ramzan, though most was financed under federal programs, from 2002 to 2012.<sup>29</sup>

## B. *Establishing Full Control*

Establishing full control in the republic cost Ramzan significant efforts and some of his reputation. After his father's death, he defeated one by one many pro-federal political strongmen and commanders who had been Akhmat's allies. In 2005, for example, he muscled out of the republic the former mayor of Grozny and vice premier, Bislan Gantamirov, and reportedly took over his business.<sup>30</sup> Gantamirov asserted that his problems resulted from refusal to pay money to Kadyrov, who accused him in turn of being a rebel accomplice and said the police acted according to the law.<sup>31</sup>

The smallest pro-federal military group, Movladi Baysarov's "Gorets" based in Pobedinskoye and partly incorporated into the Federal Security Service (FSB), was disbanded in 2006 after he refused to subordinate himself to Ramzan, who accused him of crimes. Baysarov went to Moscow and criticised the regime in interviews, in-

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<sup>24</sup> "Кадыров Рамзан Ахматович" ["Kadyrov Ramzan Akhmatovich"], *Caucasian Knot*, 25 November 2013.

<sup>25</sup> "Scars remain amid Chechen revival", *BBC News*, 3 March 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group Report, *The Challenges of Integration (I)*, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

<sup>27</sup> "Р.Кадыров: 'Несмотря на кризисные явления Чеченская Республика сохранила хорошие темпы развития'" ["R. Kadyrov: 'Despite the crisis, the Chechen Republic has kept good rates of development'"], *Grozny-Inform*, 26 December 2014.

<sup>28</sup> "Как менялся центр Грозного" ["How the centre of Grozny have been changed"], *RBC Daily*, 15 December 2014.

<sup>29</sup> "Подведены итоги реализации федеральной программы 'Восстановление экономики и социальной сферы Чеченской Республики (2002 год и последующие годы)'" ["Results of implementation of the Federal Program 'Restoration of economy and social sphere of the Chechen Republic (2002 and following years)'], [www.eip.ru/](http://www.eip.ru/); "Итоги реализации республиканской целевой программы 'Социально-экономическое развитие Чеченской Республики на 2008-2012 годы' в 2012 году" ["Results of implementation of the republican targeted program 'Socio-economic development of the Chechen Republic for 2008-2012' in 2012"], *Grozny-Inform*, 17 January 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Malashenko, *Ramzan*, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> "Бислан Гантамиров: 'Моя семья не будет платить дань Рамзану Кадырову!'" ["Bislan Gantamirov: 'My family will not pay dues to Ramzan Kadyrov!'], *Regnum*, 17 June 2005. "В Чечне борьба Кадырова с Гантамировым перешла в уголовную плоскость" ["Fight of Kadyrov with Gantamirov in Chechnya has reached a criminal level"], *Newsru.com*, 1 July 2005.

cluding a claim that Kadyrov supporters were on their way to Moscow to kill him.<sup>32</sup> Five days later Chechen police shot him dead in the city centre; the official explanation was that he was resisting arrest. A supporter in the State Duma publically implicated Adam Delimkhanov (Ramzan's relative, closest ally and at the time the republic's vice premier). Delimkhanov denied the allegation, a proposal for a parliamentary investigation was rejected, and the criminal inquiry concluded that the Chechen police had acted legally.<sup>33</sup>

Ramzan moved next against the operative-reconnaissance bureau of the federal interior ministry, the ORB-2, notorious for torture but which had also instigated criminal cases against the kadyrovtsy. Moscow refused to withdraw it, but in 2007 he had its director replaced by a loyalist.<sup>34</sup> That same year, Ramzan's bodyguards were denied entrance to the FSB building in Grozny; the next day all entrances to it were welded shut. Reportedly the federal FSB director had to intervene to unblock them, but within 24 hours Aleksandr Sulimov, a Kadyrov ally, was appointed to head the Chechen FSB.<sup>35</sup>

Attempts to muscle out the Yamadayev family, the strongest group after the Kadyrovs, took longer. It controlled the Vedensky and Nozhay-Yurt districts and parts of the plain; a brother, Sulim, led the federal defence ministry's Vostok battalion.<sup>36</sup> Confrontation broke out in April 2008, when a convoy of another brother refused to give way to Ramzan's. The next day security elements under Ramzan's control blocked the Vostok base, demanding the fighters join Kadyrov's forces.<sup>37</sup> In September 2008, Ruslan Yamadayev, a Russian State Duma member from Chechnya, was killed in central Moscow. In November, the Vostok battalion was disbanded, despite military achievements in South Ossetia. In March 2009, Sulim Yamadayev was killed in Dubai. A Kadyrov horse groom (an Iranian) was sentenced to 25 years in prison in connection with Sulim's death, and the police put Delimkhanov on the Interpol wanted list.<sup>38</sup>

An attempt against the third Yamadayev brother, Isa, failed near Moscow in July 2009. Shaa Turlaev, a former Ramzan adviser, was put on the federal wanted list for organising it<sup>39</sup>. Isa accused Kadyrov and Delimkhanov but later reconciled with

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<sup>32</sup> "Осада 'Горца'". В Чечне продолжается конфликт силовых структур ["The siege of Goretz. Conflict of security force structures continues in Chechnya"], *Vremya Novostey*, 14 November 2006.

<sup>33</sup> "Пусть Делимханов сдаст наградное оружие на экспертизу. Вице-премьера Чечни заподозрили в ликвидации Мовлади Байсарова" ["Let Delimkhanov hand in his weapon for ballistics testing. The deputy prime minister of Chechnya is suspected of liquidating Movladi Baysarov"], *Kommersant*, 23 November 2006.

<sup>34</sup> "Рамзан Кадыров открыл восточный фронт. В Чечне произошли столкновения между героями России" ["Ramzan Kadyrov has opened the eastern front. Clashes between heroes of Russia in Chechnya"], *Kommersant*, 16 April 2008; Malashenko, Ramzan, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>35</sup> Emil Pain, "От империи к федерации и обратно" ["From empire to federation and back"], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 December 2008; Crisis Group Report, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (II)*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> "Ramzan Kadyrov has opened the eastern front", *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> "Конфликт между Кадыровым и Ямадаевым – видимость" ["Conflict between Kadyrov and Yamadayev is an outward appearance"], *Gazeta.ru*, 22 April 2010. Most of the fighters did eventually join Kadyrov's forces.

<sup>38</sup> "Брат Кадырова уходит от Интерпола" ["Kadyrov's 'brother' escapes Interpol"], *Rosbalt*, 22 December 2010. Delimkhanov, who denied any involvement, was not arrested due to his immunity as a State Duma member, and he was eventually taken off the wanted list.

<sup>39</sup> Turlaev, a prominent separatist leader, fought beside Maskhadov. After he surrendered and a gangrenous leg was amputated, he became Ramzan's adviser.

Ramzan. After Isa wrote to the Dubai appeals court, it cut the sentence of Kadyrov's groom to three years, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) removed Delimkhanov from the Interpol list.<sup>40</sup> Turlaev has also been suspected of a failed March 2015 attempt on the life of the mayor of Khasavyurt (Dagestan), with whom Kadyrov is in open conflict.<sup>41</sup>

Turlaev, who according to sources lives openly in his house in Chechnya, has likewise been suspected of organising the abduction of Kadyrov's guard, Umar Israilov, from Vienna to Chechnya. Israilov fled Russia in 2004 and filed a European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) case accusing Ramzan personally of torturing him and forcing him to join his paramilitary group. The abduction failed, but Israilov was shot dead in Vienna by ethnic Chechens. Though Ramzan strongly denied any involvement, Austrian security services suggested potential links to the crime.<sup>42</sup> An alleged torture victim and inmate of an illegal prison in Ramzan's native village of Tsentoroy who filed a case against him, disappeared in Grozny in 2008, after men in camouflage detained him.<sup>43</sup>

The counter-terrorism regime, in force in Chechnya since the start of the second war, was abolished in 2009, and a significant number of Russian troops (around 20,000) were withdrawn as a result of months of lobbying by Ramzan. This enabled him to further strengthen his grip. Ramzan also rid himself of federal officials with somewhat independent positions, most recently the head of the Investigative Committee for Chechnya, Sergey Bobrov, who had begun to look into crimes that appeared to implicate local security services.<sup>44</sup> After just six months, a Putin decree replaced

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<sup>40</sup> "Открытое письмо Исы Ямадаева" ["Open letter of Isa Yamadayev"], Caucasian Knot, 21 April 2010. Isa Yamadayev announced reconciliation with Ramzan, reportedly in return for his business and a guarantee for his remaining brother, Badruddi. "Братоубийственный мир" ["Fratricidal peace"], Gazeta.ru, 23 August 2010. "Kadyrov's 'brother' escapes Interpol", op. cit. "Президент Чечни отрицает причастность своих приближенных к убийству Сулима Ямадаева" ["President of Chechnya denies involvement of his close people in killing of Sulim Yamadayev"], Caucasian Knot, 7 April 2009.

<sup>41</sup> "Экс-советник главы Чечни объявлен в розыск за организацию покушения на мэра Хасавюрта" ["Ex-adviser of the Chechen head is wanted for organisation of attempt on the life of mayor of Khasavyurt"], *Kommersant*, 11 March 2015. "Р. Кадыров принял участие в коллегии МВД по ЧР" ["R. Kadyrov took part in the board meeting of the MIA [interior ministry] of the ChR"], <https://youtu.be/jylUflvHqnY>, Khasavyurt city administration's website, 24 April 2014. A source close to Turlaev denied his involvement "Двойной розыск для экс-советника главы Чечни" ["Double search for ex-adviser of head of Chechnya"], Rosbalt, 11 March 2015.

<sup>42</sup> "Investigation Links Critic's Death to Top Chechens", *The New York Times*, 25 April 2010. "Israilov Case: Court in Vienna to reach verdict on murder of refugee who accused Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov of torture", FIDH, 31 May 2011; "Slain Exile Detailed Cruelty of the Ruler of Chechnya", *The New York Times*, 31 January 2009. "Убийство Умара Исраилова. История вопроса" ["Murder of Umar Israilov. The issue's history"], *Kommersant*, 17 November 2010. "В Австрии предъявлены обвинения трем подозреваемым в убийстве Исраилова, экс-телохранителя Кадырова" ["In Austria three suspects of murder of Israilov, ex-bodyguard of Kadyrov, were indicted"], newsru.com, 24 August 2010.

<sup>43</sup> "Россия: в Чечне похищен человек, не побоявшийся рассказать правду о пытках" ["Russia: In Chechnya a man unafraid to tell truth about torture was abducted"], Human Rights Watch, 6 August 2008.

<sup>44</sup> "Унижение Бастрькина. За что уволили главного следователя Чечни генерала Сергея Боброва" ["Humiliation of Bastrykin. What the chief investigator of Chechnya, the general Sergey Bobrov, was fired for"], *Novaya gazeta*, 7 December 2013.

him, and Ramzan subsequently received the Investigative Committee's "Heroism and Gallantry" award for "assistance in solving Committee tasks".<sup>45</sup>

As a UK Parliament report concluded already in 2010, Ramzan is in effect untouchable.<sup>46</sup> The security forces are loyal and have become more effective and professional through combat experience and training. Their chain of command is manned by trusted people who are de facto directly subordinate to him. Their instructors are trained by a distinguished ex-Russian elite forces officer who acts as Ramzan's personal assistant.<sup>47</sup>

The legal demobilisation of both separatist and pro-federal fighters was achieved by integrating them with the police, largely preserving local pro-federal units and command chains. While this guaranteed Ramzan's control and their livelihood, there was no selection process that purged criminal elements and separated the unqualified. Moreover, their violence skills were in demand during counter-terrorism operations, and their privileged status maintained their sense of belonging to a special group entitled to use force. This prevented authentic reintegration to civilian life, while raising a difficult issue of rewards for perpetrators of violence and grave human rights violations.

More effective reintegration of former separatist and pro-federal fighters into society would make a return to war much less likely. Moscow should begin by seeking creative solutions for better incorporating Chechen law enforcement into the overall federal structure. Options might include vetting the leadership of the Chechen interior ministry, breaking and mixing chains of command; temporary relocation and training of some police personnel in other regions and mixing them with police from elsewhere; and courses to inculcate the norms and attitudes of a conventional police force, including promoting local police to senior positions based on merit. Psychological counselling and rehabilitation should be made available, and police with war trauma should be encouraged to use the services, despite the widespread perception that this would be a sign of weakness. Moscow could also consider amnesty and reintegration programs for former separatist fighters serving prison sentences who have not violated international humanitarian law and so involve them in the reconciliation process.

### C. *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency*

Ramzan has largely suppressed the insurgency. Security incidents have declined impressively. In 2007, when he formally took over, 72 fighters and 82 security servicemen were killed, but in 2013, it was twenty and eighteen respectively. Including civilians,<sup>48</sup> there were 101 victims in 2013, fewer than in Dagestan or Kabardino-

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<sup>45</sup> "Президент назначил главу управления СКР по Чечне" ["President has appointed the head of the Investigative Committee in Chechnya"], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 4 January 2014. "Р. Кадиров награжден медалью Следственного комитета России" ["R. Kadyrov received Russian Investigative Committee's award"], *Chechnya.gov.ru*, 21 January 2015.

<sup>46</sup> "Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) Report, Chechnya Fact-Finding Mission", *www.refworld.org*, 10 June 2010.

<sup>47</sup> "Инструкторская группа из Чечни прошла спецподготовку под руководством Даниила Мартынова" ["Instruction group from Chechnya had special training under the direction of Daniil Martynov"], video at [http://youtu.be/mAT9UzA\\_Ync](http://youtu.be/mAT9UzA_Ync).

<sup>48</sup> One civilian was killed during a counter-insurgency operation in a forest and one injured; three teenagers were injured by grenade.

Balkaria.<sup>49</sup> There was a 15 per cent increase in 2014, however, to 117 victims, 52 of them killed.<sup>50</sup> There were two major attacks on Grozny, on 5 October, Ramzan's birthday, when a suicide bomber killed five police; and 4 December, when fifteen security personnel, two civilians and eleven rebels were killed, two buildings destroyed and part of the central market burned.<sup>51</sup> The second attack coincided with a Putin address to the Federal Assembly that Ramzan was to have attended.

Chechen counter-insurgency measures have been very tough; in recent years, no soft mechanisms have been created, unlike in Dagestan and Ingushetia, where special commissions for rehabilitating fighters were established in 2010-2011.<sup>52</sup> The reduction in insurgent activity in Chechnya has been achieved to a great extent by extensive application of collective responsibility, as well as good local intelligence. Since 2004, human rights groups have reported a practice of taking insurgents' relatives as hostages, subjecting them to torture or summary execution and burning their homes.<sup>53</sup> Ramzan has said: "Next time, father will be held responsible for his son's actions .... If you gave birth to a child you have to be accountable. Father will be held accountable for his son, mother for her daughter".<sup>54</sup>

In 2013, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) recognised the responsibility of Chechen security forces for the abduction and death of Abdul-Yazit Askhabov, in revenge for his insurgent brother. In another instance, a relative claimed the father of a sentenced accomplice was tortured with electricity, and three million roubles (\$91,000) were demanded from him for the son's crimes.<sup>55</sup>

If the Chechen leadership initially tried to conceal collective responsibility methods, it has sought to legalise them since 2014. On 5 December, Ramzan announced that family members of fighters would be expelled from the republic and their houses destroyed.<sup>56</sup> As of 1 January 2015, fifteen houses had been burnt, two after President

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<sup>49</sup> "За 2007 год милиция Чечни уничтожила 72 боевика" ["Chechen militia liquidated 72 insurgents in 2007"], *Caucasian Knot*, 17 January 2008. "Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе с 2010 по 2013 год по данным 'Кавказского узла'" ["Infographic. Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus from 2010 to 2013 based on data from Caucasian Knot"], *Caucasian Knot*, 21 March 2014.

<sup>50</sup> 24 militants, 26 security officials and two civilians were killed; 64 officials and one militant were injured. "Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе за 2014 год по данным Кавказского Узла" ["Infographics: Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus in 2014 according the Caucasian Knot's data"], *Caucasian Knot*, 31 January 2015.

<sup>51</sup> "Чечня в 2014: боевики и кадывровцы, террор власти и 'имаратчиков', громкие приговоры и важнейшие события" ["Chechnya in 2014: insurgents and kadyrovtsy, terror of authorities and 'Emirate fighters', notorious verdicts and the most important events"], *Caucasian Knot*, 30 December 2014.

<sup>52</sup> For more on soft counter-insurgency measures and the Chechen security model, see Crisis Group Report, *The Challenges of Integration (II)*, op. cit., pp. 30-33.

<sup>53</sup> "Chechnya 2004", op. cit.; "In a Climate of Fear", op. cit. "The Situation in the Northern Caucasus 2009-2010: Human Rights Violations Stemming from the Antiterrorism Campaign Continue", FIDH and Memorial, September 2010, pp. 8-9. "What Your Children Do Will Touch Upon You": Punitive House-Burning in Chechnya", HRW, 2009; "Report", Thomas Hammarberg, human rights commissioner, Council of Europe, on visit to Chechnya and Ingushetia, 2-11 September 2009, Strasbourg, 24 November 2009. Kadyrov denied these allegations. "Don't mention the human rights abuses! When Gérard Depardieu and Liz Hurley went to Chechnya", *The Independent*, 22 May 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Vajnakh TV, 30 August 2010, video archive of Memorial.

<sup>55</sup> *Askhabova v. Russia*, no. 54765/09. Crisis Group interview, Grozny, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> "Как разрушают дома в Чечне" ["How they destroy houses in Chechnya"], *Caucasian Knot*, 24 December 2014.

Putin stated that no one, including the head of Chechnya, had the right to impose extrajudicial punishments.<sup>57</sup> The Chechen parliament has proposed that the State Duma adopt a federal law making relatives of insurgents criminally responsible, potentially subject to long jail sentences.<sup>58</sup>

The insurgency has also been reduced due to internal schisms and crises. The main ideological shift in separatist militancy has been from secessionist, secular political nationalism to supra-national jihadism. As a result, many who fought in the first war for national independence (1994-1996) did not fight in the second, which began in 1999. The separatist movement became more radical after Maskhadov was killed in 2005. When the leader of the Chechen insurgency, Doku Umarov, announced in October 2007 creation of the *Imarat Kavkaz* – the Caucasus Emirate (CE), a region-wide Islamic state based on Sharia that the UN and U.S., as well as Russia, consider a terrorist organisation – the schism in Chechnya and abroad deepened further.

Former Maskhadov representative in Europe Akhmed Zakaev accused Umarov of implementing an FSB plan to destroy the Chechen national movement and said the Caucasus Emirate was meant to transform “the legitimate struggle of the Chechen people for their freedom and independence into a category of international terrorism, which has nothing to do with the interests of the Chechen people and Islamic values”.<sup>59</sup> Umarov in turn accused Zakaev of anti-state activities and the insurgents’ Sharia court sentenced him to death in 2009.<sup>60</sup> The insurgency also suffered in August 2010, when four prominent field commanders renounced loyalty to Umarov and declared they sought only an independent Islamic Chechnya, not a transnational emirate.<sup>61</sup> That schism was eventually settled by the emirate council (Shura), but the ideological contradictions seem to have remained.

Ill and physically isolated from most of its activity, Umarov became less and less capable of seriously affecting the insurgency’s operations across the region. Rank and file North Caucasus rebels have also changed significantly: most today are very young, jihad-motivated, non-Chechen and without experience of the separatist struggle, having joined to die fighting and reach paradise rather than achieve feasible political goals. The epicentre of this insurgency has shifted to multi-ethnic Dagestan, where the appeal of supra-ethnic ideology is greater.

The number of Chechens in the insurgency has been steadily decreasing. With their centuries-long record of being ready to die for their independence, Chechens do not seem very susceptible to the suicidal ideology of a global jihad. Many who have joined the conflict in Syria, which has significantly drained the human resources of the North Caucasus insurgency overall, but especially in Chechnya. A Chechen interior ministry source estimated in 2013 that 200-500 Chechens were fighting in Syria.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> “Парламент Чечни предложил сажать родственников боевиков на срок до 25 лет” [“Chechen parliament proposed to jail relatives of insurgents for up to 25 years”], Top RBC, 12 January 2015.

<sup>59</sup> “Имарат Кавказ: государство, которого нет” [“Caucasus Emirate: the state that does not exist”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 3 March 2010; “Доку Умаров сделал подарок на день рождения Путина: отрекся от Ичкерии и провозгласил Кавказский Эмират” [“Doku Umarov made a present for Putin’s birthday: renounced Ichkeria and declared Caucasus Emirate”], NEWSru.com, 31 October 2007.

<sup>60</sup> “Заказ Закаева” [“Hit Zakaev”], *Gazeta.ru*, 25 August 2009.

<sup>61</sup> “Some Chechen commanders reaffirm loyalty to Umarov”, RFE/RL, 26 July 2011.

<sup>62</sup> “Syria crisis: Omar Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader”, BBC News Middle East, 3 December 2013. “Чеченские боевики попадают в Сирию через Азербайджан, заявил представитель МВД”

In 2014, the CE announced Umarov's death. The new leader, Aliashab Kebekov, an Avar from Dagestan, was the first non-Chechen. A main reason for his selection was his rejection of nationalist ideals.<sup>63</sup> The Chechen factor in the insurgency leadership thus became minimal and was reduced even more in late 2014, when the "amir of the eastern front" of Chechen insurgents swore loyalty to Islamic State (IS) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Kebekov had declared that oaths to IS contradicted Sharia and forbidden North Caucasus fighters to cooperate with the movement.<sup>64</sup> This splintering of the already small Chechen insurgents groups has enabled the regime in Grozny to take almost total control of the republic. The security services killed Kebekov in April 2015, and the position of IS in the North Caucasus insurgency was strengthened two months later, when the "amir" of Chechen jihadis, Khamzat, swore allegiance to IS.<sup>65</sup>

Current stability in Chechnya is a result of military defeat of separatists and their ideological fragmentation rather than a peacemaking process. Chechens and Russians retain their mutual hostilities; Chechen internal reconciliation is likewise yet to happen; and war traumas remain unaddressed. To achieve a sustainable peace, the Chechen and Russian authorities should launch a reconciliation policy that would help establish truth, give recognition to victims and grievances and delegitimise violence as a means of achieving political goals. NGO initiatives in this direction and offering, among other things, psychological help are much needed.

#### D. *The Personality Cult*

Ramzan relies on the cult of personality his inner circle has created around him to justify and consolidate his almost absolute power in the republic. He is a new type of Chechen leader – hierarchal and oriental, with strong reliance on force, but also young and modern, someone who builds skyscrapers and uses the latest technology and social media. His close associates refer to him, including in the media, as "a Padeshah", a term of royalty derived from ancient Persian usage. For an egalitarian society that takes pride in skipping the feudal and royal stages of development, this is a major change.

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[“Chechen fighters get to Syria via Azerbaijan, an interior ministry representative claimed”], Caucasian Knot, 20 September 2013.

<sup>63</sup> “Боевики подтвердили сообщение о смерти Доку Умарова” [“Insurgents confirmed announcement of Doku Umarov's death”], TVnet.ru, 18 March 2014. “Али Абу-Мухаммад (Кебеков Алиасхаб Алибулатович)” [“Ali Abu-Muhammad (Kebekov Aliaskhab Alibulatovich)”], Caucasian Knot, 18 March 2014. In the audio recording reportedly of their discussion published on YouTube, the insurgent leaders discussed that it would be better to pass the leadership to a Dagestani, as Chechens have not overcome their adherence to the national idea.

<sup>64</sup> “Имарат Кавказ’ вступил в конфронтацию с Исламским государством” [“Caucasus Emirate’ came into confrontation with the Islamic State”], Caucasian Knot, 29 December 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Leaders of Caucasus Emirate units from Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia swore allegiance to IS in late 2014-2015; prominent Dagestani moderate Islamist preacher Nadir Abu Khalid went to Syria and swore allegiance to IS leader Baghdadi in May 2015. “Имарат Кавказ’ стремительно теряет влияние в Дагестане” [“Caucasus Emirate’ is rapidly losing influence in Dagestan”], Caucasian Knot, 29 May 2015. “Аслан Бютукаев присягнул лидеру ИГ от имени боевиков Чечни” [“Aslan Buytukaev swore loyalty to the leader of IS on behalf of fighters from Chechnya”], Caucasian Knot, 13 June 2015.

Most Chechens still get their news from TV. According to a local media analyst, “almost all Chechen TV news in one way or another is related to Kadyrov: a daily news program represents Kadyrov’s adventures during the day”. A Chechen journalist explained: “The secret is that he speaks the same language as the village. Chechnya is rural, even Grozny is mostly inhabited by rural people. ... He is a simple and emotional speaker; this is the secret of his popularity”.<sup>66</sup>

A key element of Ramzan’s claimed legitimacy is his effectiveness. His team never tires of repeating that peace was achieved by Kadyrov senior, while Ramzan has raised the republic from rubble. All the recent positive changes are linked directly to him. He is personally involved in every aspect of governance, whether new construction projects, security operations, support for cultural activities or opening factories and housing facilities. He sometimes drives about in a simple Lada to check on things: are women wearing headscarves; is everyone observing traffic rules; how construction sites look. When he discovers something not up to his standards, he makes sure the problem is fixed. He has repeatedly scolded and fired important officials on live TV, including for alleged extortion and embezzlement. On a number of occasions, he has reportedly battered high officials for underperformance, but he can also restore them to power.<sup>67</sup>

His active involvement in all aspects of ruling Chechnya creates the perception of omnipotence. “Ramzan is the type of person who will do something if he promised. ... Anytime he can walk in this door. Maybe he is already now walking in the lobby while we are sitting here. He is young and effective. An old man could not run around like him”, the chair of the patriotic movement “Akhmat” (named after Ramzan’s father) said.<sup>68</sup>

Many believe that to solve a problem one need only speak to Ramzan. An alleged victim of torture and a falsified criminal case was confident that if he could explain his innocence to him, the problem would be resolved.<sup>69</sup> The leader’s Instagram is full of flattering and humble requests for help on almost every kind of problem. Sometimes Kadyrov reacts; at other times, his entourage reportedly does, including by threatening the complainers.<sup>70</sup>

The Kadyrov family plays a key role in public life, including in the media. Ramzan’s mother chairs the Akhmat Kadyrov Foundation, which does most charity projects in the republic. His wife Medni runs a fashion house, Firdaws, opened by the Italian designer Roberto Cavalli and the Russian fashion king Vyacheslav Zaytsev.<sup>71</sup> Two

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<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>67</sup> “Рамзан Кадыров побил на ринге министра спорта Чечни” [“Ramzan Kadyrov has beaten the Chechen sport minister in the boxing ring”], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 23 April 2013. Muslim Khuchiev, one of Kadyrov’s closest allies, was head of the city administration, then mayor of Grozny, 2007-2012; he was fired in 2012, but reinstated in 2013 as territorial development, nationality policy and mass communications minister. “Мэр Грозного пострадал за землю. Градоначальника уволили за нарушения земельного законодательства” [“Mayor of Grozny city has suffered for the land. The city head was dismissed for violations of the land legislation”], *Kommersant*, 9 October 2012; “Хучиев Муслим Магомедович”, <http://economy-chr.ru>, biography page.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group interview, sister of victim, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Crisis Group interviews, March 2014, Grozny.

<sup>71</sup> “Кадырова Аймани Несиевна, Президент Регионального общественного фонда имени Героя России А. Кадырова” [“Kadyrova Aumani Nesieвна. The president of the regional public fund named after the hero of Russia, A. Kadyrov”], [www.chechnya.gov.ru](http://www.chechnya.gov.ru). For more on Firdaws, see <http://dm-firdaws.ru>.

sons and daughter Ayshat are known as *khafiz* (memorisers of the Quran); six-year-old Adam is reportedly Russia's youngest. The youngest daughter, Khutmat, made a video with a famous Kuwaiti *nasheed* (Islamic religious) singer.<sup>72</sup>

Republic propaganda calls Ramzan's father the first true leader of Chechnya, and "his path" is described as the official ideology. Akhmat's portraits hang everywhere; charities, schools, the main mosque and streets are named after him. A 400-metre, 80-floor "Akhmat Tower" – complete with a huge swimming pool to cover the Sunzha River along the complex and create a "two-storey river" effect – is being built in central Grozny to commemorate him. Designed by prominent Russian architect Alexander Zusik, it will be one of the tallest buildings in a country that still lacks schools and hospitals.<sup>73</sup>

An emphasis on Akhmat and somewhat reduced attention to Ramzan in the last several years is a small response to criticism of the excess of the personality cult around the present leader. Thus, the "Ramzan" patriotic club was reorganised as a patriotic "Akhmat" youth movement, with offices in all districts of the republic. School children join "the young kadyrovtsy" organisation. The Akhmat movement's chair explained: "We need to let the young people know that the choice made by Akhmat ... in 2003 was the right one".<sup>74</sup> Such supporters call the trend to promote the family justified by its exceptional talents. Many Chechens, however, find it unacceptable: "In the Chechen tradition a man should not appear in public with his wife. He should not publically demonstrate his relations with children and parents. [Ramzan] is breaking all this".<sup>75</sup>

His reported wealth contributes to the personality cult. According to a leading expert:

Most likely, [Ramzan] is indeed the richest man in the republic .... his wealth is on display – this includes a chain of gasoline stations "Leader", his luxurious residence, his home zoo and expensive cars. Ramzan is not embarrassed by his wealth. People in his circle emulate him. ... He is not afraid of gossip which circulates in small Chechnya, where nothing can be hidden from people around.<sup>76</sup>

This appeals to youth, who, a Chechen journalist says, "overwhelmingly want to be part of his circle, as they would have a good life, cars and cash".<sup>77</sup>

Despite the small adjustments that have been made, the personality cult creates the impression less that Ramzan runs the state than that he is the state. Moscow

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<sup>72</sup> "Чечня. Сын Рамзана Кадырова стал хазифизом" ["Chechnya. Ramzan Kadyrov's son has become a *khafiz*"], [http://youtu.be/tLdHEMoy\\_7k](http://youtu.be/tLdHEMoy_7k). "Дети Рамзана Кадырова один за другим становятся знатоками Корана" ["Ramzan Kadyrov's children are becoming Quran experts one by one"], Newsru.com, 5 December 2013; "Дочь Р. Кадырова в клипе Рашидом Мишари" ["R. Kadyrov's daughter in a video clip with Rashid Mishari"], <http://youtu.be/b5cmSyRidWY>; "Вечер нашидов в Чечне 1 июня" ["Evening of *nasheeds* in Chechnya, 1 June"], <http://youtu.be/LLaRmaZJSSo>.

<sup>73</sup> "Новости Чечни Информационное агентство Чеченская Республика Сегодня" ["Chechen news. Information agency 'Chechen Republic today'"], <http://youtu.be/ZDr1GYxwfqM>; "В Грозном представили новый небоскреб – башню 'Ахмат'" ["A new skyscraper, Akhmat-tower, was presented in Grozny"], *Vedomosti*, 22 August 2013.

<sup>74</sup> Crisis Group interview, Khavazhi Khazhmuradov, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Malashenko, *Ramzan*, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

should consider discouraging this, in order to replace an inherently fragile (because overly personalised) reliance on an individual for stability with strengthened trust in institutions, including those of the federal government.

### III. Ideology and Religious Policy

There are multiple reasons why the Chechen authorities, despite their achievements, constantly seek greater legitimacy. Above all, they have never been chosen in free and fair elections, and there is still strong if quiet dissent among many Chechens at home and abroad, as well as unhealed wounds from the two wars. The republic's ideology – an idiosyncratic mixture of Chechen nationalism, Sufi Islamism, Putinism and Russian patriotism – is deployed both for this purpose and to reassure Moscow of Ramzan's loyalty and unique capacity to keep Chechnya under control.

#### A. Nationalism

Kadyrov appeals to “Chechen tradition” – which he often interprets depending on his needs – in justifying most policies. Reliance on nationalism and traditionalism allows his government to create an impression that Chechnya offers a high degree of self-determination and has achieved more autonomy than separatist leaders ever dreamed of. He promotes the Chechen language and restores ethnographic and literary museums, including in remote areas.<sup>78</sup> He also supports visual symbols of “Chechenness”. In 2008, he banned European wedding gowns and ordered shops to sell the traditional Chechen equivalent. He introduced a dress code requiring state officials to wear Sufi *murid* attire and has closed orphanages and nursing homes for the elderly, because Chechen tradition “prohibits sending elderly and children to orphanages”.<sup>79</sup>

Trying to eradicate memories of separatist predecessors, the propaganda machine calls Akhmat Kadyrov Chechnya's “first president”. The separatist independence holiday (6 September) is now the Day of the Chechen Republic. Some symbolic separatists have been persuaded to return from the diaspora.<sup>80</sup> Ramzan has assumed territorial claims that separatists raised in the 1990s, notably that Ingushetia's Sunzha district and part of its Malgobek district should belong to Chechnya.<sup>81</sup> This escalated

<sup>78</sup> “В Чеченской Республике отметили День чеченского языка” [“A Day of the Chechen language was celebrated in the Chechen Republic”], Grozny Inform, 25 April 2014. Crisis Group interviews, observations, Grozny, March 2014. Two TV channels broadcast in Chechen. Grozny's also broadcasts in Russian and sends its signal abroad with help from the Akhmat Kadyrov Foundation. “О нас” [“About us”], Grozny TV.

<sup>79</sup> “Для госслужащих Чечни отныне действует дресс-код” [“Dress code for Chechen officials is in force from now on”], Radio Azattyq/Radio Liberty, 22 February 2011. Malashenko, *Ramzan*, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>80</sup> For example, the ex-health minister and Maskhadov representative in Europe, Umar Khambiev, ex-mufti Bai-Ali Tevsiev, cult separatist bard singer Timur Mutsuraev, former Interior Minister Kazbek Makhshiev and ex-parliamentarians Vagap Tutakov and Turpal Kaimov.

<sup>81</sup> The dispute dates to 1934, when the Chechen and Ingush autonomous regions were merged into the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Chechen-Ingushetia. Sunzha district was then part of Chechnya. Such boundaries were not important in Soviet times, often not shown on maps. The republic was abolished in 1944, after deportation of the Ingush and Chechens to Central Asia, and restored on their return. Prigorodny district, Ingushetia's before deportation, was transferred to North Ossetia in 1944 and not returned. As compensation, Chechen-Ingushetia was given Stavropol Krai's Naursky and Shelkovskoy districts, now mostly populated by Chechens. Ingush, whose return to Prigorodny was restricted, began to settle in Sunzha. Olga Allenova, “Вайнахский фитиль” [“Vainakh fuse”], *Kommersant*, 29 April 2013.

to an armed clash in 2013.<sup>82</sup> Ingushetia's minister responsible for nationality relations said the dispute had slowed in 2014, but "we have prepared all the justifications, archival documents; our position is very strong. If the situation becomes aggravated, the conflict will be very serious".<sup>83</sup>

The Chechen leader seeks to change the republic's international image from a war-torn hellhole to a dynamic, prosperous, secure region. A large globe with the slogan "Grozny is the centre of the world", decorates a city entrance. Ramzan promotes Grozny by inviting Western celebrities, often for his own birthday extravaganzas, who commonly assert friendship and respect for him and compliment beautiful Grozny and the Chechen people.<sup>84</sup>

Over the years Ramzan has been presented as an ambassador of Russia in the Middle East. In Abu Dhabi in 2013, he was treated on par with leaders of sovereign states. A street and park in Amman, Jordan were named for him and his father, while a Grozny street was named for King Abdallah II. He meets frequently with other heads of state, such as the king of Saudi Arabia, the emir of Qatar and the head of the United Arab Emirates.<sup>85</sup>

## B. *Putinism, Russian Patriotism*

Ramzan is fully aware of his reliance on President Putin and offers proofs of strong loyalty in return. In the last presidential election, Chechnya gave 99.76 per cent of its votes to Putin, with a turnout of 99.61 per cent. Victory Avenue in the heart of Grozny was renamed for the Russian leader.

Religiously-tinged arguments are used to persuade Chechens – for many of whom Putin is the symbol of the second war and the human rights violations of the time – that he should be supported: "The king of Saudi Arabia told me that Russia is their hope", Ramzan told a TV audience, "that they really like Putin as president of this country and hope that he stays in this role. In Jordan the situation is the same ... and overall, all Muslim countries want friendly relations with the Russian Federation. So why then should we not want the same?"<sup>86</sup>

Chechnya brings thousands of state employees, teachers, schoolchildren with parents and university students transported by buses into the streets to display loyalty to Moscow. In June 2013, 115,000 people celebrated Russia Day in Grozny's centre, singing the national anthem and carrying banners with Kadyrov's and Putin's portraits, while 6,000 children in blue, red and white formed a tricolour flag.<sup>87</sup> In

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<sup>82</sup> On 18 April 2013, 300 Chechen security officers, including the republic's State Duma deputy and close Kadyrov associate, Adam Delimkhanov, entered the village of Arshty in Ingushetia's Sunzha district. Six Ingush officers were injured in the ensuing skirmish.

<sup>83</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ruslan Khautiev, Nazran, March 2014.

<sup>84</sup> "Hollywood stars fly in on Chechen leader's birthday", BBC, 7 October 2011. Liz Hurley, Gérard Depardieu, Hilary Swank, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Vanessa-Mae and Jennifer Lopez, as well as the *nasheed* singer Maher Zain, prominent in Muslim countries, among others, have been attendees.

<sup>85</sup> "Наследный принц Абу-Даби дал торжественный обед в честь Главы Чеченской Республики" ["Crown prince of Abu Dhabi has held a dinner in honour of the head of the Chechen republic"], Grozny Inform, 11 November 2013. "В столице Иордании появилась улица имени КадYROва" ["A street named after Kadyrov has appeared in Jordan's capital"], Newsland.com, 27 February 2011. M. Vatchagaev, "Sufism in Chechnya", op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>86</sup> Grozny TV, Special Report, 28 December 2011 (in Chechen).

<sup>87</sup> "В Чечне празднование Дня России проходит при повышенных мерах безопасности" ["Russia Day celebration in Chechnya takes place with extraordinary security measures"], Caucasian Knot, 12 June 2013.

October 2014, 100,000 celebrated Putin's birthday. During the Olympic torch relay in January 2014, Kadyrov led a ceremony attended by 70,000 to emphasise Chechen patriotism. An interlocutor recalled: "They compelled school-kids, students, government employees to attend .... My niece was there from her technical college. They stood the whole day without food or tea. Afterwards ... threats of dismissals were made because not enough students had attended".<sup>88</sup>

Official discourse is also strongly anti-Western. Kadyrov blames the West for wars in Chechnya and for aiming to destroy Russia.<sup>89</sup> He zealously backs Putin's foreign policy and is particularly active on the Ukraine crisis, saying "the majority of people living today in Crimea are Russians, Cossacks. We are always with them and if necessary are ready to come to the rescue. We will stand up for Russians, Cossacks and Chechens no matter where they live".<sup>90</sup> However, Russian nationalist activist and writer Maxim Kalashnikov said, the presence of Chechen "volunteer" fighters angered many in the Donbass:

Would you like these units to appear in Vladimir, Kostroma or Petersburg? It looks like in Russia there is one region which is allowed to have its own army .... Who would like the fact that residents of Chechnya are thus privileged citizens of [Russia] and Russians are second rate?<sup>91</sup>

Kadyrov also announced that Chechnya would invest in Crimea. Grozny Avia became the first and main Russian airline to fly from Simferopol to other Russian cities, while the Kadyrov Foundation plans to build mosques in Sevastopol.<sup>92</sup> After Ramzan was put on the EU sanctions list, he banned the EU's Jose Manuel Barroso and Herman van Rompuy and U.S. President Obama from Chechnya.<sup>93</sup> He has also repeatedly said he is ready to fight for President Putin, for example in an address to 20,000 armed Chechen security servicemen at the Grozny stadium:

We are telling the whole world that we are the combat infantry of Vladimir Putin. If we get the order, we will show that this is really so .... We are tens of thousands who have had special training. We ask our national leader to consider us a voluntary special unit of the commander-in-chief. We are ready to protect Russia, its stability and borders and carry out tasks of any difficulty.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Crisis Group interview, university professor, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>89</sup> "The U.S. should leave the Caucasus alone: Chechen leader", *Russia Today*, 27 January 2011.

<sup>90</sup> "Кадиров: Мы готовы прийти на помощь русским в Крыму" ["Kadyrov: We are ready to come to the rescue of Russians in Crimea"], *Regions.ru*, 27 February 2014.

<sup>91</sup> "Ополчение вынуждено платить своими жизнями за преодоление обороны, возникшей благодаря мудрости кремлевских миротворцев. Можно ли выиграть войну в 2015-м?" ["Militia forced to pay with their lives for overcoming defence that arose due to the wisdom of the Kremlin peacekeepers. Is it possible to win the war in 2015?"], *Impersky Kazachiy Soyuz*, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> "Грозный Авиа' стал базовым перевозчиком аэропорта Симферополя" ["Grozny Avia became the main carrier of Simferopol airport"], *Caucasian Knot*, 24 April, 2014. "Фонд имени Ахмата-Хаджи Кадыева построит в Севастополе мечеть" ["Akhmat-Hajji Kadyrov's fund is going to build a mosque in Sevastopol"], *Newsru.com*, 16 April 2014.

<sup>93</sup> "Кадиров ввел санкции против Обамы и руководства ЕС" ["Kadyrov introduced sanctions against Obama and EU leadership"], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 26 July 2014. Barroso was then the European Commission president and van Rompuy the European Council president.

<sup>94</sup> "Рамзан Кадиров. Клятва Родине и Президенту" ["Ramzan Kadyrov: Oath to Motherland and President"], 28 December 2014, <http://youtu.be/osT9cEmh8TU>.

The same day 10,000 security servicemen submitted written rappers expressing their wish to be sent to any part of the world upon order of the commander-in-chief.<sup>95</sup>

Ramzan is thus trying to mitigate his Chechen nationalism with assurances that the republic is an indivisible part of Russia. By this, he appears to be trying both to create a way for Chechens, especially youths, to navigate what for many have almost always been mutually exclusive identities and to remind the Kremlin that he is their best choice to rule in Grozny.

### C. *State Sufism and Ban on Fundamentalism*

Sufi Islam is a key element of the national ideology. Kadyrov portrays himself as an emir of the Chechen polity within the Russian Federation, while his closest associates promote him as a man chosen by God. According to one, “Allah tells us ... to obey our head [of the republic]. If we all unite, faith and goodness will settle in our lands, and we, being submissive to our head, will become close to Allah”.<sup>96</sup>

The Kadyrov family, like 75 per cent of Chechens, belongs to the Sufi brotherhood of the Chechen religious philosopher Kunta-Hajji Kishiev and the Quadiri *tariqa*, whose leaders the czars and Soviets persecuted.<sup>97</sup> Ramzan is the first Chechen leader to make the dominant Qadiri Sufism a state ideology and enforce Sufi Islam. He personally instructs Muslim leaders and believers on how they should interpret and implement religion and has invested much in public displays of religiosity.<sup>98</sup> Chechen believers have contact with Sufis in the Middle East, North Africa and Malaysia, reportedly for the first time in over 100 years.<sup>99</sup> Islamic scholars frequent Grozny, while Ramzan imports precious relics related to the Prophet, mainly from the UAE but also Uzbekistan and the UK.<sup>100</sup>

Ramzan also finances the renovation and construction of mosques in other North Caucasus republics, Central Russia and Siberia;<sup>101</sup> and the Akhmat Kadyrov Foundation annually pays for the *hajj* of several hundred pilgrims from other southern Rus-

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<sup>95</sup> “Боевая пехота Владимира Путина готова к любому приказу” [“Combat infantry of Vladimir Putin is ready for any order”], Vesti.ru, 28 December 2014.

<sup>96</sup> Apti Alaudinov, deputy interior minister, Grozny TV, Vesti program, 3 February, 2014 (in Chechen). Video archive of Memorial.

<sup>97</sup> A *tariqa* is a Sufi school or order. The Qadiri *tariqa* was founded by a twelfth century Persian Sufi leader, Abdel-Qadyr al Dzhelani. Sheikh Kunta-Hajji Kishiev was crucial in the Islamisation of Chechens in the 1850s-1860s. He is considered the originator of the Quadiri *tariqa* in the North Caucasus and a saint by his followers. “Биография Шейха Кунта-Хаджи Кишиева” [“The biography of Sheikh Kunta-Hajji Kishiev”], Russian Islamic University (no date).

<sup>98</sup> His instruction includes theological issues related to celebration of non-Muslim holidays like New Year, Friday and home prayers, the role of saints in Islam, etc. He funds and supports charities, construction of mosques and restoration of *ziyarat*s (memorials) of Chechen saints.

<sup>99</sup> M. Vatchagaev, “Sufism in Chechnya”, op. cit., p. 230.

<sup>100</sup> “В Чечню привезли реликвии, связанные с жизнью пророка Мухаммеда” [“Relics related to life of Prophet Muhammad have been brought to Chechnya”], Vesti.ru, 12 July 2012; “День рождения пророка Мухаммеда отмечают в Чечне поклонением реликвиям” [“Birthday of Prophet Muhammad is celebrated by worship of relics in Chechnya”], RIA.ru, 3 January 2015.

<sup>101</sup> “Кадиров обещает построить мечеть в Карачаево-Черкесии” [“Kadyrov promises to build a mosque in Karachay-Cherkessia”], Regnum, 9 January 2008; “Ярославская соборная мечеть: фото, описание” [“Yaroslavl Cathedral mosque: photos, description”], Votrusk.ru; “Восстановление Красной мечети почти закончено” [“Reconstruction of the red mosque is almost completed”], Tomsk.ru, 14 December 2014.

sian regions, including those where Muslims are a minority.<sup>102</sup> Many associate these activities with Ramzan's claims to leadership in Russia's *umma* (Islamic community).<sup>103</sup> In January 2015, he brought hundreds of thousands into Grozny's streets to protest *Charlie Hebdo* caricatures of the Prophet and speak against Western attempts to "deliberately incite a worldwide fire of religious and ethnic hatred".<sup>104</sup>

Elderly Chechens, especially those who remember the Soviet ban on Islam, appreciate these efforts to promote traditional Chechen religion and Chechnya as the centre of Russian Muslims. However, part of the population is uncomfortable that Sufism has become the servant of Kadyrov's state and considers that adoration of Chechen saints promoted by Kadyrov and his own personality cult contradict the main principle of Islam – the oneness of God. For this reason part of youth embrace Salafism, and experts claim, even join jihad.<sup>105</sup>

The religious policy in the republic is strict. Any movement or ideology that digresses from the declared "path" of Akhmat-Hajji Kadyrov is unacceptable.<sup>106</sup> According to Ramzan, "if they are incapable of understanding the gist of our true path – [they] will not live a second in Chechnya. [They] are more dangerous than those vermin who walk in the forests".<sup>107</sup> Fundamentalist Salafism, referred to pejoratively as "Wahhabism", is banned; the republic authorities have repeatedly and openly said, particularly in Chechen-language media, that Wahhabis are not to be allowed to live in Chechnya and indeed should be killed. Ramzan told a television audience:

The Prophet showed us clearly and accurately the way according to his *Hadith*, where he states that this suits God. Precisely because of faith in this path we fought. ... I fought Wahhabis for Allah. ... You all know tens of cases how and where I killed them ... such people must not exist in the Chechen Republic. The Prophet prescribed us to kill people like them.<sup>108</sup>

Within this ideological framework, the authorities carry out campaigns against hijabs that cover the chin and beards without moustaches, the visual symbols of Salafi followers. Many religious Chechens are bearded, and at one time Ramzan encouraged hijab, so the line between the acceptable and forbidden is thin and may be judged arbitrarily at times by the security services.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> "Мусульмане Северного Кавказа не удовлетворены организацией хаджа" ["North Caucasus Muslims are not satisfied with the organization of hajj"], "Опыт хаджа 3. И поздравляю всех с Новым годом!" ["Hajj experience-3. And happy New Year to all"], Caucasian Knot, 11 October 2012, 31 December 2010; "Рамзан Кадыров профинансирует поездку мусульман Северной Осетии в хадж" ["Ramzan Kadyrov will finance the hajj trip of North Ossetian Muslims"], Ossetia.ru, 8 October 2012.

<sup>103</sup> "Объединит ли мусульман Рамзан Кадыров?" ["Will Kadyrov unify the (Russian) Muslims?"], *Izvestiya* (online), 11 December 2009. "Лидер несогласных мусульман: зачем Кадыров собрал миллион человек" ["The leader of the dissenting Muslims: why Kadyrov gathered a million people"], RBC, 19 January 2015.

<sup>104</sup> "Leaders hail Muslim Prophet, assail West at huge Chechnya rally", RFE/RL, 19 January 2015.

<sup>105</sup> M. Vatchagaev, "Sufism in Chechnya", op. cit., p. 231.

<sup>106</sup> Bay-Ali Tevsiev, Grozny TV, Vesti program, 22 January 2014 (in Chechen).

<sup>107</sup> Grozny TV, Vesti program, 15 January 2014 (in Chechen). Video archive of Memorial.

<sup>108</sup> Ramzan Kadyrov's interview, Grozny TV, Vesti program, 31 January, 2014 (in Chechen). Video archive of Memorial. Wahhabism emerged in the eighteenth century, long after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

<sup>109</sup> "Ношение бороды" ["The wearing of a beard"], Heart of Chechnya (no date).

In December 2013 and January 2014, just before the Sochi Olympics, there were reports of mass detentions of men of “inappropriate” appearances, many of whom were brought to police stations, held for several hours and had their beards shaved; in some cases, they were also said to have been beaten.<sup>110</sup> Altogether, more than 5,000 meetings, presentations and talks were carried out, including by the spiritual board of Muslims and involving more than 150,000 people; 1,021 were detained from mosques and madrasas by the internal affairs ministry and “educational work” carried out with them due to their “abnormal behaviour, clothes and other features ... that do not correspond to our religion”, an official said.<sup>111</sup> Several of those arrested disappeared, according to human rights groups and relatives.<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group was repeatedly told that in some cases relatives were ordered to beat bearded kin in front of the security services, but no direct victims or participants of such violence agreed to talk.

Ramzan’s close associate, Deputy Interior Minister Apti Alaudinov, publicly instructed a regional police chief on how to deal with “Wahhabis”:

I swear by the Quran sent down to us, if there is even a slight similarity with Wahhabis, I have taken it upon myself .... I’m personally saying to mow them down. Those you can, throw in prison. If there’s an opportunity to plant something in his pocket, do it. Do what you want, and kill whomever you want. The ruler said to pass this on... I swear by Allah, I support this.<sup>113</sup>

Arrests and harassment campaigns against fundamentalists continue.<sup>114</sup> Nonetheless, experts and Chechnya residents say, Salafism is still alive underground. A practicing Muslim explained: “Young people have their opinion; the majority adapt to the circumstances, but deep inside they have their clear attitude to what’s going on. ... [the authorities] can’t fully strangle religious beliefs”.<sup>115</sup> According to a local activist, “young people very painfully perceive infringement of their rights. They think that their beard is part of their personal identity and integrity; they get angry, and some increasingly say that they don’t care what happens and will do what they wish, that they are tired of living in fear”. Pro-Kadyrov youth activists insist, however, that reli-

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<sup>110</sup> Crisis Group interviews, residents of Grozny, Urus-Martan, Gudermes, Chechnya, March 2014. “Чечня: извилистый путь ‘борьбы за истинную религиозность’” [“Chechnya: a tortuous way of fight for the true religiousness”], Memorial, 16 January 2014.

<sup>111</sup> “Бай-Али Тевсиев, директор Департамента по связям с религиозными и общественными организациями администрации главы и правительства ЧР. Чеченская Республика сегодня” [“Bai-Ali Tevsiev, director, department for relations between the presidential administration of the Chechen Republic and religious and social organisations”], “The Chechen Republic Today”, Grozny TV, 20 February 2014 (in Chechen); Memorial video archive.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group interview, wife of disappeared, Grozny, March 2014. “В Чечне силовики задерживают молодых людей из-за их внешнего вида” [“Security officers detain young men for their appearances”], Mir Islama, 18 January 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Meeting in Urus-Martan, <http://youtu.be/iZS3d-habuE>, 12 December 2013.

<sup>114</sup> “Чечня: жители Грозного жалуются на задержания мужчин с бородами” [“Chechnya: Grozny residents complain about detention of people with beards”], Memorial, 12 February 2015. “О новых задержания молодых людей в Грозном сообщают местные жители” [“Local residents report new detentions of young men in Grozny”], “Жители Чечни сообщают о задержаниях молодых людей силовиками после атаки боевиков на Грозный” [“Residents of Chechnya report detentions of young men by security services after fighters’ attack on Grozny”], Caucasian Knot, 26 February 2015, 13 February 2015.

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

religious freedom is respected: “Everything is allowed here except Wahhabism .... Because Wahhabism is extremism. Although Jews are against the Quran, we are building a synagogue for them”.<sup>116</sup>

Khabashism, a strand of Sufism that has taken some root in Chechnya, is also banned.<sup>117</sup> Shiism is considered a sect, and the website of the Akhmat-Hajji Kadyrov central mosque explains that its followers share numerous dangerous digressions from true Islam.<sup>118</sup> Religious leaders are strictly tasked to combat “non-traditional” trends. Respondents from different parts of the republic told Crisis Group that imams continuously praise Ramzan in mosques.

At the same time, Ramzan pursues a policy of forced Islamisation, even stating that Sharia supersedes Russian law.<sup>119</sup> He promotes polygamy, bans alcohol and has introduced a strict dress code for women in state institutions, schools and universities.<sup>120</sup> Girls must wear scarves from the first grade. Armed, bearded men regularly raid shops, cafes and nightclubs to control morality. In January 2014, Ramzan announced that every resident of Chechnya would pronounce 100,000 *salavats* for the birthday of the Prophet.<sup>121</sup> Electronic counting devices were distributed in state institutions, and each civil servant ordered to do 500-600 daily.<sup>122</sup> State institutions reported every day on progress, and Kadyrov expressed his satisfaction with the result: “Our people have 30,000,000,000 times glorified the Prophet this month ...”.<sup>123</sup> The same policy was enforced in 2015.

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<sup>116</sup> Crisis Group interview, Khavazhi Khazhmuradov, leader, “Akhmat” movement, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>117</sup> This movement emerged in Lebanon in the 1980s, spread to Russia via Ukraine and Kazakhstan and has introduced significant dogma innovations. See Memorial bulletin [www.memo.ru/d/194575.html](http://www.memo.ru/d/194575.html), pp. 12-13.

<sup>118</sup> “Шииты - это сектанты” [“Shiites are sectarians”], <http://www.serdce-chechni.ru>.

<sup>119</sup> “Кадиров заявил, что шариат важнее законов РФ, а ‘врагов ислама’ следует уничтожать” [“Kadyrov stated that Sharia is more important than the RF laws, and ‘the enemies of Islam’ should be liquidated”], Newsru.com, 1 June 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Tanya Lokshina (Human Rights Watch), “Virtue Campaign for Women in Chechnya under Ramzan Kadyrov: Between War Backlash Effect and Desire for Total Control”, in Anne Le Huérou, Aude Merlin, Amandine Regamey, Elisabeth Sieca-Kozłowski (eds.), *Chechnya at war and beyond* (New York, 2014), pp.236-255.

<sup>121</sup> A *salavat* is a type of prayer asking Allah for blessing, usually pronounced during the obligatory prayer (*namaz*) after reading the At-Tahiyat (greeting prayer).

<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group interview, government employee in Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Grozny TV, Vesti program, 31 January 2014 (in Chechen).

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## IV. Chechen Economy

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The economy and infrastructure were almost entirely destroyed by two wars and inter-war plundering. Since 2001, at least 464 billion roubles (about \$14 billion) have been spent from the federal budget on restoration.<sup>124</sup> The republic was financed directly between 2002 and 2012, funds allocated on the basis of estimated costs for specific needs, mostly through two special federal “targeted” programs for socio-economic development. These programs enabled major reconstruction, but the real sector of the economy has yet to develop.<sup>125</sup>

### A. *The Official Economy*

The federal government ended special financing for Chechnya in 2012, though Grozny requested continuation of the program until 2017 and additional direct funding. Now Chechnya is funded like other North Caucasus regions through the federal programs “South of Russia” (2014-2020) and “Development of the North Caucasus Federal District” (2012-2025).<sup>126</sup> The Chechen government is unhappy with this, since the republic still needs schools, hospitals, kindergartens, and industrial enterprises. A “mere 6 to 7 per cent of the total pre-war Chechen economy has been restored”, the industry and energy minister acknowledged several years ago.<sup>127</sup> Nonetheless, Chechnya remains one of Russia’s most subsidised regions, and federal funding is still the only source for most projects. Over 85 per cent of the 64.5 billion rouble (\$1.2 billion) budget is “‘non-repayable’ transfers from the federal budget”.<sup>128</sup>

The government has ambitious plans for reviving industry and agriculture, and officially showed increases in 2014 of 7.8 per cent in gross regional product (GRP), 23.5 per cent in industrial output and 2.2 per cent in agriculture. Sixteen indigenous industrial enterprises function, most restored after the wars through the federal programs; a few others are branches of big Russian monopolies.<sup>129</sup> Though the Accounts Chamber said some 7.9 billion roubles (\$239 million) in 2012 spending violated laws

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<sup>124</sup> “Полтриллиона после войны: сколько потрачено на восстановление Чечни” [“A half trillion after the war: what was spent on Chechnya restoration”], RBC daily, 15 December 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Other Russian regions have to provide local co-financing. “Чечню лишают эксклюзивной программы развития” [“Chechnya is deprived of the exclusive program of development”], *Izvestiya*, 15 October 2012. “Real sector of economy” is the term used in Russia for the sectors, excluding finance, that produce goods and services. “Restoration of economy and social sphere” and “Socio-economic development of the Chechen Republic”, both *op. cit.*

<sup>126</sup> “Chechnya is deprived of the exclusive program of development”, *op. cit.* Crisis Group Europe Report, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (IV): Economic and Social Imperatives* (to be published in July 2015).

<sup>127</sup> “Создание новой экономики – своими силами? (“Молодежная смена”)” [“Creation of the new economy – with own forces? (“Youth turn”)”], Grozny-Inform, 1 July 2011.

<sup>128</sup> “Закон Чеченской Республики от 31 октября 2014 года О внесении изменений в закон Чеченской Республики ‘О республиканском бюджете на 2014 года на плановый период 2015 и 2016 годов’” [“The law of the Chechen Republic from 31 October 2014 on amendments to the law ... on ‘The republican budget for 2014 and planned period of 2015 and 2016’”], [www.garant.ru](http://www.garant.ru), 15 October 2014.

<sup>129</sup> “Аналитическая справка о состоянии и перспективах развития отдельных отраслей реального сектора экономики Чеченской Республики за январь-сентябрь 2014 года” [“Analytic report on condition and prospects of development of separate branches of the real sector of the Chechen Republic’s economy in January-September 2014”], Economy, territory development and trade ministry.

and regulations, Moscow evaluates the quality of governance positively and awarded the republic a 95.7 million rouble (\$2.9 million) bonus for effective budgetary spending that year.<sup>130</sup>

### B. *The Double Economy*

That local elites have acquired much wealth, society is highly unequal, and many people are poor is allegedly at least partly the result of a double economy in which a parallel, significantly centralised system of economic relations dominated by powerful clan networks exists beside the formal one. It reportedly operates with impunity due to the indulgence of federal authorities, the climate of fear and the leadership's status.

Numerous sources reported that employees of republic institutions must give part of their monthly salary and bonuses to their employers, as well as contribute to purchase of necessary equipment. They also reported being used as free labour. Many said their state-funded organisations were required to spend on building projects and raise money for expensive presents to officials or support public events. A ministry employee said average monthly kick-backs in spring 2014 were 5,000 roubles (\$150). University professors must also pay:

In 2013, I was awarded six-seven bonuses, I signed but never actually received them; each time it was 35,000-50,000 roubles (\$1,000-\$1,500). Each time six-seven people receive their bonuses; others don't. Motivation awards that should be paid two-three times per year are not being paid. Once they were paid as required, and people ... couldn't believe it.<sup>131</sup>

Official celebrations reportedly also become a burden for republic employees: "As soon as they plan major public events here and invite celebrities, they withdraw some amounts from teacher's salaries".<sup>132</sup>

The system is elaborate. "The mechanism has been developed to perfection. The number of staff of the state institutions is incredibly inflated .... The tragedy is that the system has become very deeply embedded in the minds of the people. Even if you try to change it now, they don't know how to live and work differently".<sup>133</sup> A principal of a rural school explained:

The budget ... is 6.5 million roubles (\$200,000). Every year we must give over one million [to the authorities]. The budget has several categories, the largest "other expenditures" .... Most of this we have to give to them [the authorities]. Then I have to collect receipts ... and pay around 10 per cent for them to balance my reports. Moreover, I have to give the district administration a full salary for one staff member, so I must hire a "dead soul" – a relative, because you can't ask a stranger to sign for a salary without receiving it. Of course I will never officially

<sup>130</sup> "Счетная палата проверила использование бюджетных средств в Чеченской Республике" ["Accounts Chamber reviewed the use of budget funds in the Republic of Chechnya"], Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, 17 July 2013, 31 March 2013. M. Basnukaev, "Reconstruction in Chechnya: at the intersection between politics and the economy", in *Chechnya at war and beyond*, op. cit., pp. 84, 133-152.

<sup>131</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group interview, Chechnya resident, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Crisis Group interview, director of state institution, Grozny, March 2014.

complain, since I have faked these documents. There are non-existent employees in our reports, in some places no receipts; we just signed the bills.<sup>134</sup>

A chief accountant of a municipal school and a director of a state cultural institution described similar exactions. Directors of state institutions, including hospitals, local law-enforcement, courts and prosecutors' offices also reportedly pay.<sup>135</sup> Businesses reportedly also must contribute regularly. A wife said, "my husband has a pharmacy and is always asked for money. Shops pay 50,000-100,000-150,000 roubles (\$1,500-\$3,000-\$4,500) monthly, plus each holiday".<sup>136</sup>

Ramzan has denounced the widespread extortion of small businesses: "Everyone is dying to 'inspect'! Everyone! ... some need to buy something for a birthday, someone needs a dress for his wife, a present for the mother-in-law – all go to 'inspect', extort money. ..." <sup>137</sup> He has threatened severe punishments, and recently some very small businesses seem to be exempt from systematic exactions.

The best business opportunities are reportedly still monopolised by ruling elites at republic and district levels. A local expert said, "they are always short of money; they have captured all big business and control small business. Production is withering away or, if profitable, it gets monopolised. They ... strangle competitors. After the war, business revived, but now it escapes to other regions".<sup>138</sup> These elites reportedly also capture the best real estate. "1,420 metres of Putin Avenue have become golden", a Grozny resident who works there complained:

They have ousted state institutions from there: a kindergarten is now a flower shop; the state dental clinic is now a clothing boutique; municipal pharmacy N°79 is struggling to survive; instead of a museum, there is now a restaurant. They tried to kick out the old municipal library because one of them wanted it for his restaurant, but many famous people intervened, went to Kadyrov, and finally they left the library where it was.<sup>139</sup>

### C. Corruption

Informal, irregular double "taxation" is complemented by corruption and kick-backs of the kind endemic in the North Caucasus but, according to Crisis Group observations and sources, particularly large scale in Chechnya. Compensation for housing destroyed during the war or the 2008 earthquake and payments of "maternity capital" have reportedly involved major embezzlement of state funds.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, January 2013, March 2014; Igor Kalyapin, Committee Against Torture, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny residents, August, December 2012.

<sup>137</sup> Interview, Grozny TV, 21 January 2013, video archive of Memorial.

<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014; Chechen businessmen, Kazakhstan, November 2014.

<sup>139</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014; "Центральная городская библиотека Грозного под угрозой закрытия" ["The central Grozny city library is under threat of closure"], Voice of Russia, radio, 11 December 2013; "Центральная городская библиотека Грозного останется в старом помещении, сообщает ее директор" ["The central Grozny city library will remain in its old premises"], Caucasian Knot, 19 December 2013.

<sup>140</sup> The government pays maternity capital, a subsidy to encourage births, for any child beyond the first. It can be used only to improve housing, education or the mother's pension. The average individual payment is about 400,000 roubles (\$12,500).

Two men from a rural area recounted that in their village only 20-30 per cent of compensation due for earthquake destruction was paid; those who tried to challenge this were reportedly abused and lost all their payment.<sup>141</sup> An investigation of a multi-billion rouble embezzlement related to maternity capital has been stalled for several years, though the Accounts Chamber found in 2012 that distributions by the pension fund's Chechen Office "leave room for the misappropriation of funds".<sup>142</sup> Witnesses and victims were reportedly taken into a forest together with spouses and subjected to imitation executions.<sup>143</sup>

Much of the population lives off pensions and welfare payments. The director of a social rights NGO explained: "People try to do everything possible to get disabilities status for their children. It can be done for bribes; then you get 5,000 rouble (\$150) pensions .... State employee income is significantly reduced by exactions: the less money from the centre, the greater the pressure on people here".<sup>144</sup>

Reconstruction is reported to be a source of great corruption and misuse of state funds. A construction contractor said reconstruction budgets are much inflated, but actual costs are unacceptably reduced, resulting in low-quality work. The lining of the tallest skyscraper, "Olymp", burned almost completely in 2013, an official said, as "a result of cutting costs".<sup>145</sup> Multiple sources reported another practice under which reconstruction assignments are distributed among ministries and state institutions, which must finance work on a certain number of buildings; these then collect the necessary money from employees and clients or from "dead-soul" salaries. Subsequently renovation of most of these buildings is reportedly reimbursed by federal funds.

In 2011, more than 2,500 workers from Turkey, Central Asia and Chechnya who worked on reconstruction were not paid for several months. Between April and June, up to 40 young Chechens were said to have joined the insurgency as a result.<sup>146</sup> Foreign workers were expelled, while Chechens protested until early 2012, when their gathering near Grozny's central mosque was violently broken up, and several dozen were reportedly detained, beaten and tortured.<sup>147</sup>

Small-scale corruption is said to be omnipresent in every sphere, from health care to schools, buying land to obtaining a driver's license. "It took a photo, 15,000 roubles (\$450) and fifteen minutes to get a driver's license in Argun", a Grozny resi-

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<sup>141</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>142</sup> As much as 600 million roubles (\$18 million) may be involved. "Счетная палата проверила использование бюджетных средств Отделением ПФР по Чеченской Республике" ["Accounts Chamber reviewed the use of budget funds by the Chechen Republic's department of Russia's Pension Fund"], Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, 28 June 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Crisis Group interview, February 2013; "Чечня: пострадавшие от мошенничества с материнским капиталом безуспешно пытаются привлечь к ответственности должностных лиц" ["Chechnya: maternity capital fraud victims are unsuccessfully trying to bring officials to account"], Memorial, 29 November 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>145</sup> "ВМЧС причиной пожара в 'Грозном-сити' назвали желание сэкономить" ["EMERCOM said decision to cut costs is cause of fire in 'Grozny City'"], *Forbes*, 11 April 2013.

<sup>146</sup> "Чечня: молодежь по-прежнему исчезает и, предположительно, уходит в лес" ["Chechnya: youths still disappear and allegedly leave for the forest"]; "Чечня: силовики жгут дома родственников боевиков" ["Chechnya: law enforcement burns houses of relatives of insurgents"], Memorial, 1 July 2011, 10 December 2014.

<sup>147</sup> "Турецкие строители просят из Чечни" [Turkish construction workers ask to leave Chechnya], *Izvestiya*, 22 November 2011; Crisis Group interview, Grozny, August 2012.

dent said. According to another, “everyone is stealing from wherever he works”.<sup>148</sup> Much corruption is an element of the double economy and allegedly highly centralised, though Ramzan regularly denies this in live television appearances. The head of Ramzan’s native village (Tsentoroy) recounted on camera that he collected on the order of a higher official, who in turn claimed this was done on Ramzan’s order: “He ... gave us a list ... and forced us to take money from them. Four bases were allocated to me ... I had to take 1.5 million roubles [\$45,000] .... I informed these people ... ‘I was ordered this, and you are obliged to do it’ ... Then in a week I collected money from them”. In this case as in others, Ramzan punished the officials and explained that corrupt people, even among his close associates, extort money using his name but without his knowledge.<sup>149</sup>

The double economy reportedly works smoothly due to clanship and fear. The ruling elites form a tight and trusting network of mutually dependent people linked by kinship and place of birth and residence. They exchange favours, engage in mutual cover-ups and are interdependent in many ways. Society does not rebel due to the need to retain scarce jobs and the repressive climate.<sup>150</sup>

There have been allegations that part of this informal income is transferred to the charitable foundation named after Ramzan’s father and chaired by his mother, Aymani Kadyrova.<sup>151</sup> Created in 2004, it rebuilds houses, builds mosques, restores sacred places and carries out other big charity projects, though the business journal *Kommersant* calls it “one of the most non-transparent NGOs in the country”.<sup>152</sup> Ramzan insists there is no illegal fundraising. The foundation relies, he says, on donations from rich Chechen businessmen and on business income:

[P]eople said earlier that a part of their salaries is exacted for the foundation. The foundation ... is engaged in commercial activities ... and not only on our territory, but also beyond its borders. ... From this income we will construct housing for people, kindergartens, thanks to the chair of the pension foundation, Magomed-Emin, and all the 970 staff members of this foundation, who work tirelessly.<sup>153</sup>

Serious corruption in disbursing funds has dramatically reduced the effectiveness of federal programs, and meaningful corrective measures have not yet been adopted.<sup>154</sup> Ramzan tries hard to demonstrate success to Moscow, arguing that many apparent problems result from the non-reporting of small private business income. In 2013, he told a TV audience:

For three years, I am asking you to deal with one problem. ... Everyone is saying unemployment, unemployment ... there is no unemployment; you just need to properly register the people who work. ... Wahhabis are those I hate most. I will ask from you the same I ask from them by the end of the month. ... Just as we are

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interviews, residents of Grozny, July 2013.

<sup>149</sup> “Vesti” news outlet, Grozny TV channel, 25 May 2012.

<sup>150</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>151</sup> Crisis Group interviews, residents of Grozny, Gudermes, Argun, 2012-2013.

<sup>152</sup> “Работа на взнос. Как устроен благотворительный фонд имени Ахмата КадYROVA” [“Work for contribution. How charity foundation named after Akhmat Kadyrov is organised”], *Kommersant*, 1 June 2015.

<sup>153</sup> “Interview with the President”, Grozny TV channel, 3 July 2010.

<sup>154</sup> For more on corruption in the region, see Crisis Group Report, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (IV)*, op. cit.

hunting them, I will follow you. We promised that in five years unemployment will be reduced to zero.<sup>155</sup>

Official reports, however, often clash with the realities observed by Crisis Group analysts and numerous sources. Thus, the reported decline in unemployment from 67.7 per cent in 2006 to 15.5 per cent in 2014 is questionable.<sup>156</sup> For example, local residents say that in the last six-seven years, when federal money was streaming in, the main jobs were in construction. But now, with the reconstruction boom fading and the federal targeted programs having been completed, actual employment has declined dramatically.

Moscow should carry out a resolute anti-corruption campaign in the republic, investigating the numerous allegations of extortion, exaction, double accounting, “dead souls” and other illegal practices. Targeted, strictly-controlled funding to support the economy and infrastructure should be continued. Above all, more needs to be done to integrate Chechnya into the Russian economy.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ramzan Kadyrov, interview, “Vesti” news outlet, Grozny TV channel, 5 September 2013.

<sup>156</sup> “Рамзан Кадиров: Чечня в 2014 году вошла в число лидеров по приросту населения, темпам роста инвестиций и вводу жилья” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: Chechnya is among leaders in population growth, rate of investment growth and housing”], Regnum, 29 December 2014. “Кадиров: безработицу в Чечне сведут к нулю, ЕГЭ не приукрашивают” [“Kadyrov: the unemployment in Chechnya will be reduced to zero, USE is not flattered”], RIA, 7 August 2013.

<sup>157</sup> For more on economy in the region, see Crisis Group Report, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (IV)*, op. cit.

## V. Rule of Law

Chechnya's human rights record since the early 1990s has been poor. Major violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity, reportedly committed by the federal troops, such as indiscriminate shelling and bombing,<sup>158</sup> secret prisons,<sup>159</sup> enforced disappearances,<sup>160</sup> mass graves<sup>161</sup> and death squads that featured in the early 2000s, have still not been investigated.<sup>162</sup> What has emerged after the Chechenisation process was completed is a legal regime in which Russian laws have very limited application.<sup>163</sup> According to an expert:

None of the rule-of-law institutions work in compliance with the Russian law, not only in law enforcement, but also in civil law. Land code, social and commercial law function through administrative management by local officials who have turned it into a tool for extortion and a source of self-enrichment.<sup>164</sup>

Another rights defender said, "there is no law, no Russian constitution in Chechnya. There is only a single law formulated in two words: 'Ramzan's order'".<sup>165</sup>

Violence has become more targeted, but serious violations continue to be reported: torture, enforced disappearance, summary execution, hostage-taking, illegal detention, falsification of criminal cases, arson, and a lack of fair trials.<sup>166</sup> Numerous sources allege that physical violence can be applied to anyone who comes into conflict or disagrees with representatives of the ruling elite and security services, regardless of the reasons. Intimidation and illegal violence reportedly affect all spheres of life and

<sup>158</sup> The ECtHR has delivered thirteen judgments on indiscriminate bombing.

<sup>159</sup> "Joint study on global practices in relation to secret detention in the context of countering terrorism", UN Human Rights Council, 26 January 2010. ECtHR decisions include *Vakhayeva and Others v. Russia*, 29 October 2009; and *Karimov and Others v. Russia*, 17 July 2009. Alexander Cherkasov, "Секретные тюрьмы России – на Кавказе" ["Russia's secret prisons are in the Caucasus"], *Svobodnaya pressa*, 27 January 2010.

<sup>160</sup> "Worse Than a War. 'Disappearances' in Chechnya – a Crime Against Humanity", Human Rights Watch, March 2005.

<sup>161</sup> "The 'Dirty War' in Chechnya: Forced Disappearances, Torture and Summary Executions", HRW, 1 March 2001. *Estamirov and others v. Russia*, ECtHR judgment on summary execution of five Chechen family members, 12 October 2006.

<sup>162</sup> Crisis Group interview, Alexander Cherkasov, Memorial, Moscow, June 2013. "Death squads continue to operate in Chechnya. Argun: new graves have been discovered and opened, new 'disappearances' of detainees", Memorial press conference, 13 March 2002. Crisis Group Report, *The Challenges of Integration (I)*, op. cit., pp. 9-16.

<sup>163</sup> For more on rule of law in the North Caucasus, see Crisis Group Report, *The North Caucasus (III): Governance, Elections, Rule of Law*, op. cit., pp. 32-47.

<sup>164</sup> Crisis Group interview, Igor Kalyapin, chair, Committee Against Torture, member, Presidential Council for Civil Society, Moscow, 11 December 2014.

<sup>165</sup> Svetlana Gannushkina, head, Civic Assistance Committee, press conference, Moscow, 11 December 2014.

<sup>166</sup> "3 дела в чеченском суде. Репортаж из Грозного" ["Three cases in the Chechen court. A report from Grozny"], *Snob.ru*, 16 April 2014; "Monitoring Rights in the Chechen Region, a Month at a Time", *The New York Times*, 24 September 2011; "Аналитическая справка МОО 'Комитет против пыток' о состоянии расследования уголовных дел, возбужденных по факту исчезновения людей в Чеченской Республике" ["Analytical note МОО 'Committee against torture' on the status of the investigation of criminal cases initiated in relation to disappearances of people in the Chechen Republic"], *Caucasian Knot*, 18 May 2012; "Ситуация в зоне конфликта на Северном Кавказе: оценка правозащитников. Зима 2013 – 2014 гг" ["Situation in the conflict zone of the North Caucasus: human rights activists' evaluation"], Memorial, April 2014.

keep the system functioning, while perpetrators enjoy impunity, and federal prosecuting agencies are impotent.

#### A. *Police and Investigations*

Among factors that make Chechnya unique is the role of its head, Ramzan Kadyrov, the only regional leader who de facto controls the security forces. Many rule-of-law problems are directly linked to the social background of those agencies. Former insurgents who never left the war behind but changed or were forced to change sides in it have serious difficulty themselves to adhere to law.

According to questionable official statistics, Chechnya has the fewest registered crimes per capita in the country.<sup>167</sup> The federally appointed chief prosecutor noted: “The decrease in recorded crimes ... is due not only to the improvement of law enforcement, but also to a high level of concealable, latent crimes and manipulation of statistics. Thus, in six months in 2013, prosecutors discovered 246 crimes hidden from reporting, including five direct concealments of facts”.<sup>168</sup>

The impunity of security and other officials is a key reason for lawlessness in Chechnya. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture reported in 2013 that “the problem of impunity ... remains acute”, and “it was not possible to carry out an effective investigation vis-à-vis complaints of unlawful actions by officials belonging to those structures [interior ministry]”.<sup>169</sup>

A handful of kadyrovtsy were sentenced in 2006-2007, when Ramzan was still establishing power, and several departments under federal jurisdiction were independent.<sup>170</sup> A more recent attempt at accountability in the case of Islam Umarpashaev, kidnapped from his house in December 2009, allegedly by the Chechen OMON (special interior ministry mobile unit), failed. He said he spent four months in a police station basement, beaten constantly and witnessing the torture of others. OMON chief Alikhan Tsakayev denied that his personnel have detained civilians illegally.<sup>171</sup> Umarpashaev was released in April 2010 after the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights and the ECtHR intervened. Local investigators are reluctant to investigate the case, allegedly because it is said to involve a senior security official.<sup>172</sup> Police have not been interrogated or put in an identity parade, while internal affairs

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<sup>167</sup> “‘Сто процентов’, добытые пытками и насилием” [“‘100 per cent’ achieved by torture and violence”], *Echo of Caucasus*, 27 April 2014.

<sup>168</sup> “Пресс-конференция прокурора республики Шарпудди Абдул-КадYROVA” [“Press conference of the Republic’s Prosecutor, Sharprudi Abdul-Kadyrov”], website of Russian Federation Prosecutor’s office, 13 August 2013.

<sup>169</sup> “Report to the Russian Government on the visit to the North Caucasian region of the Russian Federation carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture ... from 27 April to 6 May 2011”, Strasbourg, 24 January 2013.

<sup>170</sup> “Доклад российских неправительственных организаций по соблюдению Российской Федерацией Конвенции против пыток и других жестоких, бесчеловечных или унижающих достоинство видов обращения и наказания в период 2006 – 2012 годы” [“Russian NGOs’ report on Russia’s adherence to the Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, 2006-2012”], *Public Verdict*, 8 November 2012.

<sup>171</sup> “Chechen forces may face new scrutiny over abductions”, *Reuters*, 7 September 2011.

<sup>172</sup> “История о неожиданном окончании карьеры молодого оперуполномоченного из Грозного Алихана Ахмедова” [“The story of the unexpected end of a career of a young criminal investigator from Grozny, Alikhan Akhmedov”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 17 June 2013.

agencies allegedly are sabotaging investigation. Senior federal investigator Igor Sobol and witnesses reportedly have received threats from OMON officers.<sup>173</sup>

Certain investigations are plainly dangerous. Alikhan Akhmedov, a criminal investigator at the Zavodskoy district police department and his colleague, Arsamerzuyev, detained a distant relative of the OMON chief on suspicion of murdering an OMON officer. The next day, they said, they were themselves violently detained in a cafe by armed men, taken to the Chechen OMON base and tortured for three hours.<sup>174</sup> Akhmedov and Arsamerzuyev were arrested, convicted of the abuse of an OMON officer and given suspended sentences. A criminal investigation into Akhmedov's alleged torture was opened, but despite strong support from a human rights group, has been suspended some ten times.<sup>175</sup>

Investigation of crimes by Chechen law enforcement is challenging even in Moscow. In one case, central FSB office investigators could not pursue a suspected abduction, torture and extortion offence; a highly respected federal investigator was reportedly dismissed, and the Chechen police freed.<sup>176</sup>

An exception was the murder of ex-deputy prime minister and outspoken Putin critic Boris Nemtsov, shot dead on 27 February 2015 near the Kremlin. The murder stimulated protests in Moscow, and a week later five ethnic Chechens were detained and accused of murder, including the erstwhile deputy commander of the "Sever" ("North") battalion of interior ministry troops in Chechnya commanded by Adam Delimkhanov's brother. All have denied involvement. A witness and alleged suspect, a Delimkhanov nephew, appeared unreachable: all entrances to his native village were blocked by armed men until he reportedly flew out of Russia.<sup>177</sup> Nemtsov's closest colleague, Ilya Yashin, publicly linked Kadyrov to the murder. The Chechen leader dismissed the allegations and blamed Ukraine and the U.S.<sup>178</sup>

However, the investigation stumbled, unable to approach those who may have commissioned the crime. Certain federal security officials tried, revealing the enmity of parts of the security structure toward Ramzan and disagreement with the Kremlin over Chechnya. Attempts to undermine Kadyrov were clear again in April, when Stavropol kray police carried out an operation in Grozny, killing a suspect. Kadyrov was furious that his police were not informed and ordered them to fire on colleagues from other regions who appear in Chechnya without prior notice. The federal interi-

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<sup>173</sup> "Official Inaction: Sabotage or Unprofessionalism?", Memorial, 12 October 2011. "Кавказский детектив' Ислама Умарпашаева закончился в Нижегородской области" ["Caucasian crime mystery of Islam Umarpashaev has ended in Nizhegorodskaya Oblast"], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 10 February 2014.

<sup>174</sup> Crisis Group interview, Alikhan Akhmedov, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>175</sup> "The story of the unexpected end of a career", op. cit.

<sup>176</sup> "Москва-Юрт" ["Moscow-Yurt"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 25 March 2013.

<sup>177</sup> "Boris Nemtsov, Putin foe, is shot dead in shadow of Kremlin", *The New York Times*, 27 February 2015. "Бориса Немцова застрелили в нерабочее время" ["Boris Nemtsov shot dead in off-duty time"], *Kommersant*, 11 March 2015; "В убийстве Бориса Немцова было все, кроме религии" ["There was everything except religion in Nemtsov's murder"], *Kommersant*, 13 March 2015. "Ключевой свидетель по делу Немцова Геремеев покинул Россию" [Key witness in Nemtsov case, Geremeev, has left Russia], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 13 April 2015.

<sup>178</sup> "Я догадываюсь, кто заказчик" ["I guess who commissioned it"], *Gazeta.ru*, 10 March 2015. "7 Insights Into the Mind of Ramzan Kadyrov", *The Moscow Times*, 19 June 2015.

or ministry protested, and Ramzan retreated, saying he had been emotional; experts said the informal contract between him and the Kremlin would be reviewed.<sup>179</sup>

Parts of the federal security services and the military may try to use any opportunity to weaken Ramzan's grip, but unless President Putin's reputation is seriously damaged by his protégé, the rules of the game are unlikely to change radically. Ramzan may take some measures to remedy his public image but will resist anything that weakens his power, and the Kremlin will not risk putting him under sufficient pressure to change his calculations.

## B. *The Judicial System*

The judicial system was reinstated in Chechnya in 2001, and jury trials were begun in 2010. "Formally the judicial system now functions not worse than in many other regions, in some aspects even better than in Moscow, for example in complying with procedural requirements", a human rights lawyer said.<sup>180</sup> The quality of most judgments is not lower than the Russian average, mostly because judges use templates and rarely rule creatively.<sup>181</sup> Exceptionally, the Supreme Court in 2012 decided to order compensation of one million roubles (\$30,000) for moral damages in cases of death and disappearance during the second war, referring to ECtHR rulings. District courts then produced similar decisions.<sup>182</sup>

The distinctive feature of the Chechen judiciary is that open, at times brutal pressure can be exerted on judges and jury by republic authorities. A Supreme Court judge, Vakhid Abubakarov, who heard the case of 28-year-old Suleiman Edigov, recused himself after he concluded Edigov was illegally abducted, detained by police for more than a month, tortured and forced to confess:

A person who introduced himself as the internal affairs minister, Lieutenant-General Ruslan Shakhaevichem Alkhanov, called me from an unidentified phone and said he is certain that the defendant is guilty and warned me against acquittal. After the intervention of an official of such a high level ... any sentence ... will look like a concession in case of a guilty verdict or a demonstration of courage in acquittal.<sup>183</sup>

At a public meeting with Ramzan, it was announced that the judge, according to "operational information", took a bribe to release Edigov, who had been hired by insurgency leader Doku Umarov to kill Kadyrov. The new judge, German Alexandrov, found Edigov guilty and sentenced him to 14.5 years in prison.<sup>184</sup> Chechen authori-

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<sup>179</sup> "Кадиров разрешил огонь на поражение" ["Kadyrov allowed fire for effect"], *Gazeta.ru* 23 April 2015. "Кадирова и силовики: конфликт исчерпан? Максим Шевченко" ["Kadyrov and security servicemen: conflict is over? Maxim Shevchenko"], *Youtube.com*, 4 May 2015.

<sup>180</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kirill Koroteyev, Memorial, Moscow, May 2014.

<sup>181</sup> Crisis Group interviews, lawyers, Kirill Koroteyev, Dokka Itslayev, Moscow, May 2014, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>182</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Chechen human rights activists, lawyers, Moscow, Grozny, May, February 2014. "Доклад о деятельности Уполномоченного по правам человека в Чеченской Республике в 2013 году" ["Report on the activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Chechen Republic in 2013"], website of Chechen Ombudsman, 2014.

<sup>183</sup> "Есть Судья" ["There is a judge"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 11 November 2013.

<sup>184</sup> "Кто кого в Чечне боится" ["Who fears whom in Chechnya"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 13 March 2014. "Судейман Эдигов, обвинивший чеченских полицейских в пытках, осужден на четырнадцать

ties do not recognise court decisions they do not like and arrest acquitted persons again. Ramzan has several times criticised jury trials because they acquit defendants more often than do professional judges.<sup>185</sup>

In February 2014, a Supreme Court jury acquitted two men of armed robbery, mostly of officials. This verdict infuriated Ramzan, who immediately accused the jurors on TV of negligence, incompetence and corruption and blamed the court because no lawyers were on the jury (thus showing unfamiliarity with the relevant law, which does not require lawyers on a jury).<sup>186</sup> According to relatives of the acquitted, armed men came to their homes that day to rearrest them; one was taken and held illegally for more than two months.<sup>187</sup>

Following this verdict, Ramzan asked Moscow to abolish jury trials in Chechnya, as not fitting “with the Chechen mentality”, because many are in a kin relationship. Federal authorities had used an earlier request from him as a ground for a more restrictive terrorism law, including prohibiting jury trials in terrorism cases.<sup>188</sup>

Chechens desperate for justice in their republic appeal to the ECtHR, which has recognised a violation of the right to an effective remedy in most of the 293 Chechnya judgements it has handed as of June 2015. But the government has mostly limited its response to paying compensation.<sup>189</sup>

### C. Instrumentalisation of Customary Law and Women’s Rights

Security officials often refer to Chechen traditional law (*adat*) and use it for their own needs. The blood feud is still strong in Chechnya, where many new feuds were created during two wars. “If there were no blood feud in Chechnya, much more crime would happen; people here are not afraid of prison or the law, but of revenge”, the chair of the patriotic movement “Akhmat” said.<sup>190</sup> Security servicemen declare blood feuds for colleagues with relatives of insurgents or their supporters. “If he is an accomplice, if he carried a criminal in his car and has not reported him to authorities, he is an even more dangerous criminal. ... If his [supporter’s] relatives will not give

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с половиной лет” [“Suleyman Edigov, blamed Chechen police on tortures, sentenced for 14,5 years”], Committee against torture, 23 May 2014.

<sup>185</sup> “Так уже было” [“We’ve had this before”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 18 November 2013. In Russia overall, juries acquit in 16 per cent of their trials, compared to the 1 per cent of acquittals by professional judges. “Оправдывая подсудимого, ты ссорисься с правоохранительными органами” [“By acquitting the accused you quarrel with the law enforcement agencies”], *Moscow News*, 18 January 2013.

<sup>186</sup> “Чечня: полицейские более двух месяцев незаконно удерживают оправданного человека” [“Chechnya: police illegally held acquitted man more than two months”], Memorial, 9 June 2014. “Р. Кадыров подверг критике деятельность присяжных заседателей” [“R. Kadyrov has criticised the work of the jury”], 27 February 2014, [http://youtu.be/9oLcYl8\\_yuw](http://youtu.be/9oLcYl8_yuw).

<sup>187</sup> Crisis Group interview, relatives of the acquitted, Grozny, March 2014. The interior ministry denied the detention and illegal incarceration and took the position that the man had been in hiding out of fear of a blood feud. “Чечня: ‘Точка’ в деле о незаконном лишении свободы человека, оправданного судом?” [“Chechnya: ‘A full stop’ in the case on illegal deprivation of freedom of a person who has been acquitted by court”], Memorial, 22 January 2015.

<sup>188</sup> “Чечня: Кадыров обрушился на суд присяжных, оправдавший людей” [“Chechnya: Kadyrov has cracked down on a jury that acquitted the accused”], Memorial, 7 March 2014. Federal law 130-F3 (2014), “On amendment of specific laws of the Russian Federation”.

<sup>189</sup> “From Judgment to Justice. Implementing International and Regional Human Rights Decisions”, Open Society Justice Initiative, 2011.

<sup>190</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

him to us, I will have *chir* [blood revenge], ... and they become my enemies”, Ramzan said.<sup>191</sup>

This contradicts *adat*, according to which direct male relatives of the victims should perform feuds. Blood feuds mostly apply only to the person who committed the murder and rarely to direct male relatives. Colleagues have no right “to take blood”, especially if relatives have not announced a feud. Families of victims of enforced disappearances or summary executions cannot openly declare blood feud, though individual revenge killings and acts of terror do occur in such cases.<sup>192</sup> Moreover, *adat* legitimises long delay in feuds. Many families have done their own investigation but wait to take vengeance until the political situation changes.

Despite his support for blood feuds and claims that he personally avenged his father’s death, Ramzan actively seeks to reconcile such cases and in 2010 created a reconciliation commission.<sup>193</sup> A year later he abolished it, because after handling 451 cases, there was no longer “any blood feud conflict in the republic”.<sup>194</sup> These reconciliation processes often were televised, and some families were reportedly compelled to reconcile. Crisis Group learned of a case in which two families were forced into public reconciliation, but once the Commission left, the victim family’s eldest told his adversary counterpart it was forced, and the blood feud continued; the counterpart reportedly accepted this as a right.<sup>195</sup>

Ramzan’s efforts to enforce tradition and morality affect women more than men. He has described women as a husband’s property, whose main role is to bear children.<sup>196</sup> A polygamy advocate, he says it is “better to be a second or third wife, than be killed ... we have very harsh customs ... if a young or divorced woman has relations, her brother would kill her and the man she was with”.<sup>197</sup> Though he bans underage marriage and bridal abduction, a recent scandal involving the 46-year-old (57, according to other reports) Nozhai-yurt region police chief suggests that many families cannot resist pressure from powerful security types or those with good connections who seek to take underage girls as second wives.<sup>198</sup>

In Chechen tradition, small children stay with a divorced father; not infrequently mothers are denied visitation. Unlike in Soviet times, Chechen courts are very reluctant to protect mothers who want to keep their children. Such deviation from Rus-

<sup>191</sup> Kadyrov, to Chechen security force representatives, “Vainakh” TV channel, 10 August 2010.

<sup>192</sup> “Уничтоженный в столице Чечни боевик прибыл в Грозный мстить милиционерам” [“The insurgent who was killed in Chechnya’s capital came for revenge on the policemen”], *Caucasian Knot*, 24 August 2007.

<sup>193</sup> “According to Chechen traditions, a father, son or brother, if he is Chechen, must fulfil a blood feud”, Kadyrov said. “Рамзан Кадиров: почти все убийцы отца мертвы” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: almost all my father’s murderers are dead”], *Lenta.ru*, 27 April 2005. “Заключить мировую. В Чечне работает штаб по примирению кровников” [“To make peace. A reconciliation of blood feuds commission is working in Chechnya”], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 30 September 2010.

<sup>194</sup> “Рамзан Кадиров: ‘Комиссия по примирению кровников выполнила свою задачу’” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: Commission on reconciliation of blood feuds has accomplished its mission”], *Chechnya.gov.ru*, 17 October 2011.

<sup>195</sup> Crisis Group interview, Chechen resident, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>196</sup> “Рамзан Кадиров: ‘Россия – это матушка родная’” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: ‘Russia is our dear mummy’”], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 24 September 2008; “Воспитание по-чеченски” [“Upbringing, the Chechen way”], *Echo of Moscow*, 13 January 2006.

<sup>197</sup> “Кадиров призвал чеченцев брать по второй жене” [“Kadyrov appealed to Chechens to get a second wife”], *Infox.ru*, 7 April 2009.

<sup>198</sup> Elena Milashina, “Так уж сложилось” [“It happened so”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 13 May 2015.

sian legal standards costs Moscow the support of Chechens who desire more modern social relations and laws.

Honour killings have become more common in recent years, committed not only by the closest relatives but also by cousins and uncles serving in the police or administration. Law-enforcement agencies act very reluctantly on the crime and often approve. Ramzan said of the murder of several women in 2008 that they had “loose morals”, and “if a woman runs around, and if a man runs around with her, both of them are killed”.<sup>199</sup> As noted above, the federal official who headed the republic’s Investigative Committee, Sergey Bobrov, received threats and was replaced in 2013 after he launched an investigation into the murder of three women implicating Shali district police officers.<sup>200</sup>

#### D. *A Climate of Fear*

Fear keeps the population obedient.<sup>201</sup> “If somebody does not take my orders in this republic, I’ll force him”, Ramzan says, “because I know what God says, what the law says and what the people need”. Top interior ministry officials echo this: “God damn those who dare to turn right or left from the path intended by our head”, one said.<sup>202</sup> The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe noted that “current authorities continue to nurture a climate of pervading fear”, while the ex-chair of Russia’s federal Accounts Chamber, Sergey Stepashin, said simply, “the whole republic is in Ramzan Kadyrov’s ownership”.<sup>203</sup>

The presence of many armed men in public places reinforces the feeling that coercion can be used easily. Security services leak videos of torture, humiliation and brutal punishments, including of women, that are shared on mobile phones and disseminated by internet.<sup>204</sup> A café owner in central Grozny turned pale and refused to

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<sup>199</sup> “Чечня: борьба за моральный облик женщин приобретает все более жестокие формы” [“Chechnya: the fight for the moral image of women is taking on increasingly harsher methods”], <http://memo.ru>, 21 March 2012. “В Грозном похищена девушка, утверждает ее мать” [“Young woman was kidnaped in Grozny, her mother said”], *Caucasian Knot*, 29 July 2013. “Chechen women face strict rule of Islam”, *The Washington Times*, 2 March 2009. For more on honour killings and gender-based violence in Chechnya, see: “Чеченцы в России” [“Chechens in Russia”], *Memorial and Civic Assistance*, 2014.

<sup>200</sup> Crisis Group interview, Igor Kalyapin, Committee against Torture, Grozny, February 2014. “Унижение Бастрыкина. За что уволили главного следователя Чечни генерала Сергея Боброва” [“Humiliation of Bastrykin. What the chief investigator of Chechnya, the general Sergey Bobrov, was fired for”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 7 December 2013. The police chief, Ruslan Ireziyev, threatened Bobrov in an audio tape posted on YouTube. “Скандал. Кадыров vs Бобров” [“Scandal. Kadyrov vs. Bobrov”], 24 October 2013, [http://krasview.ru/video/444960-SKANDAL.\\_Kadyrov\\_vs\\_Bobrov](http://krasview.ru/video/444960-SKANDAL._Kadyrov_vs_Bobrov).

<sup>201</sup> “Flames and Fear in Chechnya”, HRW, 2 July 2009; “Kadyrov’s rule inspires fear in Chechnya”, *The Washington Times*, 20 March 2011; “Tsarnaev homeland Chechnya: rebuilt from war, ruled by fear”, Reuters, 1 May 2013.

<sup>202</sup> Ramzan Kadyrov, inquiring into corruption at the Emergency Medicine Centre, “Vesti” news release, Grozny TV channel, 18 May 2013. Aпти Alaudinov, speaking on countering radical movements in Urus-Martan, *ibid*, 3 February 2014.

<sup>203</sup> “Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus”, Resolution 1738 (2010). “Stepashin о доходах Кадырова: ‘У него в собственности вся республика’” [“Stepashin on Kadyrov’s income: the whole republic is his property”], *Newsru.com*, 27 May 2009.

<sup>204</sup> “Chechnya: Beating of Malika Soltayeva, 2006”, <http://youtu.be/UfJ1tB3JX3E>; “В Чечне Кадыровские садистски пытают заложника током” [“In Chechnya Kadyrov’s sadists torture a hostage with electricity”], *Daily Motion*, 9 February 2009; “Кадыровцы пытают и убивают людей” [“Kadyrovtsy torture and kill people”], <http://youtu.be/8FwSRFE2SU>.

sell coffee because of Ramzan's order not to serve food in daytime during Ramadan, explaining, "If I give you coffee, armed men will come to me".<sup>205</sup>

Despite the apparent decline in violence, fear has become stronger. Human rights organisations say people are scared to report violations publicly, especially after murders of activists in 2009.<sup>206</sup> Seeing the impunity of law enforcement and republic leaders, there is a concern that pursuit of legal remedies might be futile, even counterproductive: "This man [Kadyrov] remains unpunished despite everything; federal authorities cover up all his crimes in Russia and abroad".<sup>207</sup> During interviews, respondents turned off their phones, insisted on anonymity and allowed no voice recording. A Grozny resident said:

It was easier when federal troops were here; we knew where the enemy was, where danger came from. There was a feeling of solidarity. We went out and were not afraid to protest. Now our nation is divided; people do not know what to think. Everything is so confusing; everyone has relatives in law enforcement agencies and prefers not to discuss politics to avoid conflicts within their families.<sup>208</sup>

Grozny residents say the main cause of fear stems from public humiliation and the collective responsibility authorities impose: "It's not even violence that is scary. They will disown you, publically humiliate you, make you a prostitute or a drug addict. You won't be able to live with dignity in this republic anymore. This is worse than death", one explained. A young female activist recounted:

First, they called me and threatened to create problems for my family. Then they called my mom, and that was it: I stopped. I can stand for justice if I'm alone, but as soon as they start to threaten family, my world narrows down to my home. Everyone knows someone who was a victim of their violence, knows what they are capable of.<sup>209</sup>

Some accept the rules, and some like everything, but there are also those who get angry every day and their anger is growing. "There is a bunch of people in this republic", a Grozny resident said, "and all the others are slaves". How sustainable the status quo is in this climate is the question. A Chechen journalist concluded: "Either we will become perfect cynics, or there will be an explosion here".<sup>210</sup>

### E. *Opposition and Dissent*

No opposition is accepted. Ramzan himself says, "I'm the boss. And no one else but me, understand? Ramzan – and this is it. No other names in this region, there is only one name – Kadyrov".<sup>211</sup> Dissenters are considered enemies. Deputy Interior Minister Apti Alaudinov said candidly, "those who even yap against the authorities, I swear by Allah and the Quran, up to the maximum possible ... I do not want to tell this in

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<sup>205</sup> Crisis Group experience, Grozny, July 2012.

<sup>206</sup> See Section V.E. below. Crisis Group interview, Oleg Orlov, Memorial, Moscow, March 2015.

<sup>207</sup> Crisis Group interview, local resident, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>208</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>209</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>210</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Grozny, March 2014.

<sup>211</sup> "Кадиров: 'Я хозяин, а вы все никто!'" ["Kadyrov: 'I'm the master, you are nothing'"], 26 May 2011, video at <http://youtu.be/D6S93jGGzW8>.

front of the camera, [but] I personally will try to create as much trouble as possible for this man”.<sup>212</sup>

Intellectuals and artists are at risk if the authorities are dissatisfied with their statements or work. Scholars may face persecution for interpretation of facts. Journalists and writers complain of severe censorship. Ramzan said on Russian TV of a Chechen writer from St. Petersburg who touched on sexuality in Chechen society, “there is no such writer here ... and secondly, if he writes such things, he is not a Chechen and not even a Muslim, not even human”. He promised to find the writer’s relatives and tell them to control his statements.<sup>213</sup> A young writer from Chechnya was beaten up in Moscow after he published a story perceived as critical of the authorities, and his relatives were reportedly put under pressure.<sup>214</sup>

Ramzan has since 2011 virtually banned public discussion and collective commemoration of the 1944 Stalinist deportation, as the deportation day coincides with the Russian army day holiday. Instead, he introduced a common Day of Memory and Mourning on 10 May, when his father was buried. He criticised a Chechen activist, Ruslan Kutaev, who initiated an academic conference on the 70th anniversary of the deportation in 2014 and was arrested two days later, officially for possessing three grams of heroin.<sup>215</sup> The arrest, Kutaev alleged, was followed by torture and beatings, in which two very senior officials allegedly participated. Kutaev has been sentenced to four years in prison.<sup>216</sup> The virtual ban on memory of the deportation is an offensive, short-sighted policy and should be abolished. The suppressed collective memories of deportation under the Soviet regime fuelled Chechen separatism in the 1990s; repeating this mistake can have tragic consequences.

Only very brave complainants turn to independent NGOs for help. After public criticism and threats by Ramzan and others against Russia’s prominent human rights group Memorial, its leading member, Natalya Estemirova, was abducted near her house in Grozny on 15 July 2009 and later that day found shot dead in Ingushetia.<sup>217</sup> The chair of Memorial accused Ramzan of responsibility, which he denied, asking,

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<sup>212</sup> Meeting in Urus-Martan, 12 December 2013, video at <http://youtu.be/iZS3d-habuE>.

<sup>213</sup> “Кадиров: Садулаев – не писатель и вообще не человек” [“Kadyrov: Sadulayev is not a writer and not even a human”], Rosbalt Inform agency, 1 November 2010.

<sup>214</sup> “В Чечне писатель подал иск о защите достоинства к председателю республиканского Союза журналистов” [“Writer filed a defamation lawsuit against the head of republic’s Union of Journalists”], *Caucasian Knot*, 23 February 2011; “На чеченского писателя Арслана Хасавова совершено покушение в Москве” [“A murder attempt has been committed against the Chechen writer Arslan Khasavov in Moscow”], *Caucasian Knot*, 9 March 2011.

<sup>215</sup> “He held the conference dedicated to the 23rd February; that’s why he was detained”, Ramzan said. “В Чечне появился первый политический заключенный?” [“Has the first political prisoner appeared in Chechnya?”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 11 March 2014.

<sup>216</sup> “Брат, куда ты дел мои итальянские тапочки?” [“Where did you put my Italian slippers, brother?”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 4 June 2014. “Russia: Chechen Activist Leader Arrested, Beaten”, Human Rights Watch, 9 July 2014.

<sup>217</sup> “A Fearless Activist in a Land of Thugs”, *The New York Times*, 17 July 2009; “В эфире чеченского ТВ прозвучали угрозы в адрес правозащитников” [“Threats against human rights activists have been made on Chechen TV”], Human Rights in Russia, 18 July 2009; “Им нужен только негатив” [“They need only the negative”]; “Заявление Уполномоченного по правам человека в Чеченской Республике” [“Statement of the Chechen Republic’s human rights ombudsman”] website of the head and government of the republic, 10 July 2009, 15 July 2009. “Начался суд по иску Кадырова – показания ответчика Орлова” [“Court case begins on Kadyrov’s lawsuit – testimony of the defendant Orlov”], Memorial, 25 September 2009; “Russia: Bring Natalia Estemirova’s Murderers to Justice”, Human Rights Watch, 13 July 2012.

“why would Kadyrov kill a woman who is not needed by anyone? She never had honour, dignity, conscience”.<sup>218</sup> In August 2009, unidentified law enforcement officials took the director of the humanitarian organisation Save the Generation, Zarema Sadulayeva, and her husband, Alik Dzhabrailov, from their office; the next day they were found dead, their bodies showing numerous signs of torture. In October, during an operation Ramzan led, an employee of the Danish Refugee Council, Zarema Gaysanova, was taken from home and has not been heard from since.<sup>219</sup> No investigation of these cases has been completed, and many independent activists have fled Chechnya.<sup>220</sup>

A joint mobile defence group was set up after the Estemirova murder. Lawyers from different regions of Russia, coordinated by Igor Kalyapin, the head of “Committee against Torture”, work in rotation on cases of abduction and torture that appear to involve republic security officials.<sup>221</sup> The group has routinely been harassed by the Chechen authorities and smeared in local media, the lawyers illegally detained, repeatedly pursued and searched; their office was burned down in 2014 and attacked again in June 2015. Pro-Kadyrov activists also threw eggs at Kalyapin during a press conference in Moscow on human rights violations in Chechnya.<sup>222</sup>

Verbal attacks by officials contribute to the dangerous environment. According to Adam Delimkhanov, “people who call themselves human rights defenders, who help these [militants], they actually complement their activity, and their goals are the same. The evil that they are doing is as great as the evil that is done by those who are in the forest”. Ramzan called Memorial “enemies of the people, enemies of the law, enemies of the state”, and later said “a man named Kalyapin brought Western security services’ money to terrorists to commit an attack on Grozny in December 2014”.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> “Мемориал’ связывает убийство Эстемировой с политикой властей в Чечне” [“Memorial relates the murder of Natalya Estemirova to the policy of Chechen authorities”], *Caucasian Knot*, 16 July 2009. “Рамзан Кадыров: ‘Я служу народу’” [“Ramzan Kadyrov: I serve the people”], *Svoboda.org*, 9 August 2009.

<sup>219</sup> “Два года со дня убийства Заремы Садулаевой и Алика Джабраилова: крут подозреваемых установлен, но нет политической воли наказать убийц” [“Two years after the murder of Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov: a group of suspects has been established, but there is no political will to punish the murderers”], *Memorial*, 18 August 2011. “Последнее некитайское предупреждение Страсбургского суда” [“The last non-Chinese warning of the Strasbourg court”], *Committee against Torture*, 24 September 2013.

<sup>220</sup> “Аналитическая справка МОО ‘Комитет против пыток’ о состоянии расследования уголовных дел, возбужденных по факту исчезновения людей в Чеченской Республике” [“Analytical note of the Committee against Torture on the investigation of the criminal cases relating to the disappearance of people in the Chechen Republic”], *Caucasian Knot*, 18 May 2012; “Два года после убийства Натальи Эстемировой: Следствие идет по ложному пути” [“Two years after Natalya Estemirova’s murder: the investigation is going the wrong way”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 15 July 2011; “Two years after the murder of Zarema Sadulayeva and Alik Dzhabrailov”, *op. cit.*

<sup>221</sup> “Кавказские борзые” [“The Caucasian greyhounds”], *Esquire*, 8 August 2011.

<sup>222</sup> “Задержание в Шали: правозащитники просят провести проверку” [“Detention in Shali: human rights activists asking for an inspection”], *Human Rights in Russia*, February 2010. “Правозащитников закидали яйцами на посвященной Чечне пресс-конференции” [“Eggs thrown at human rights activists at Chechnya press conference”], *Interfax*, 11 December 2014; “Russia: End persecution of activists in Chechnya”, *HRW*, 14 December 2014. “Hammer-wielding raiders storm human rights group offices in Chechnya”, *The Guardian*, 3 June 2015. In June, the lawyers had to escape from masked men through the window of their second-floor office.

<sup>223</sup> “Threats against human rights activists have been made”, *op. cit.* Interview, Kadyrov, Grozny TV channel, 3 July 2010. “Кадыров назвал фамилию подозреваемого в финансировании боевиков” [“Kadyrov announced the name of the person suspected of financing insurgents”];

Independent NGOs have been asked repeatedly to report all violations personally to Ramzan and not make them public.<sup>224</sup> The UK's Parliamentary Human Rights Group concluded: "Chechnya's own Human Rights Ombudsman is hostile to the concept of independent NGOs holding the Government to account".<sup>225</sup> A participant spoke of a televised public meeting in which Ramzan criticised independent NGOs and said activists there were paid 100,000-150,000 roubles (\$3,000-\$4,500) for being present. A senior official said the federal ombudsman received no complaints from Chechnya, and if he did, "soon there would be phone calls from serious persons intervening on behalf of the Chechen leadership".<sup>226</sup>

The UK parliamentary mission reported: "The ordinary Chechen had no recourse to any mechanism, whether political or judicial, to hold President Kadyrov's administration to account", and "if Chechnya is to remain an integrated part of Russia in the future", Russia's leaders should "ensure Chechens are entitled at the very least to the same legal protection as other Russian citizens".<sup>227</sup>

That is a sensible prescription. In the interest of long-term stability and national integrity, Moscow should put Chechnya into the framework of Russia's constitution and laws by improving the effectiveness of criminal investigation, prosecution and judicial independence. Important elements would be to ensure that law protects Chechen women as elsewhere in the country, and Chechen officials do not instrumentalise *adat* for their own ends or put it above Russian law. Opportunity should be improved for intellectuals, journalists and civic activists to operate securely, and consideration should be given to establishing a truth and reconciliation commission to help establish facts and recognise sufferings of victims on both sides of the conflict as a step toward ending the vicious circle of violence between the Russian state and its Chechen minority.

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"непрямая речь либо раз в год, могут выплачиваться к определенным датам и юбилеям" ["Kadyrov announced the name of the person suspected of financing insurgents"], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 11 December 2014.

<sup>224</sup> Meeting of Kadyrov with the Chechen Public Chamber, "Vesti", Grozny TV channel, 25 February 2014. Crisis Group analyst conversation with Kadyrov in previous capacity, Gudermes, February 2008.

<sup>225</sup> "... Chechnya Fact-Finding Mission", [www.refworld.org](http://www.refworld.org), 10 June 2010.

<sup>226</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil rights activist, Grozny, March 2014; Russian Federation ombudsman's office, Moscow, April 2014.

<sup>227</sup> "Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) Report", *op. cit.*

## **VI. Conclusion**

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Ramzan Kadyrov's Chechnya is an absolute exception within the Russian Federation, a parallel polity with informal well-trained, combat-ready security structures inside the official ones, a parallel tax system, its own legal regime and, in effect, foreign relations. Despite superficial appearances, this arrangement has not resolved the Chechen conflict. The status quo is based on military defeat of the separatists in an asymmetric war, but in the absence of any positive political dynamic or legal redress, the insurgency continues to recruit. Stability is fragile and overly personalised, based on the bond between Ramzan and Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin has created and endorsed this system, but it does not control events on the ground, and while the Chechen leader's loyalty to the Russian president may be genuine, it may not be easily transferable. If the political landscape were to change in Moscow, Ramzan's security forces could conceivably prove a problem for the Kremlin.

Ramzan's own situation would also be vulnerable. Without Putin's support, he could face serious challenges from a wide spectrum of insurgents, would-be strongman successors and citizens dissatisfied with the oppressive aspects of his rule threatening full-fledged deadly conflict. The prudent response to these multiple risks for all concerned would be for Moscow to initiate measures to bring Chechnya under the Russian constitution and laws, improve its quality of governance, put an end to parallel economic practices, integrate and control the Chechen security forces and end their impunity. It would not be easy, but turning a blind eye to the current situation on assumption that the conflict is solved stores up worse problems for the future.

**Brussels, 30 June 2015**

**Appendix A: Map of Chechnya**

