

# EUROPEAN CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Open letter to:

Mr. Kevin Costner

Ms. Vanessa Mae

Ms. Eva Mendes

Shakira

Ms. Hilary Swank

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EUROPEAN CENTER FOR  
CONSTITUTIONAL AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS e.V.

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**Berlin, 29/09/2011**

**Re: Open letter regarding your invitation to Grozny/Chechnya**

Dear Mr. Costner

Dear Ms. Mae

Dear Ms. Mendes

Dear Shakira

Dear Ms. Swank

—  
AMTSGERICHT  
BERLIN-CHARLOTTENBURG  
VR 26608

—  
VORSTAND:  
CHRISTIAN BOMMARIUS  
DIETER HUMMEL  
LOTTE LEICHT  
MICHAEL RATNER

—  
GENERALSEKRETÄR:  
WOLFGANG KALECK

As it has been reported by various media, you are planning to attend, on invitation of the Head of the Russian Republic of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov, an event in the Chechen capital Grozny, on 5 October 2011. We urge you to reconsider your participation in the event.

We would like to apprise you of the fact that Mr. Kadyrov is subject to a criminal investigation in Austria for ordering the murder of a key-witness, Mr. Umar Israilov, in an application before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The witness, whose allegations are supported by his medical records confirming torture injuries described by him, gives in this application testimony about Mr. Kadyrov's personal involvement in acts of torture:

“(…) In the gym, Ramzan Kadyrov showed me some sort of machine with a handle and told me that he had just obtained it

and was going to try it out on me. Kadyrov's guards forced me to sit down on the seat of one of the weight training machines and attached a wire to my ear, and another one to my little finger. Kadyrov then started to twirl the handle and he electrocuted me. I felt terrible pain in my head and hand. I can't really find the words to describe the pain but it felt horrible. I could not stay seated. The current forced me to stand up. Kadyrov twirled the control handle for some seconds and then stopped. He laughed at my reaction to the current. His guards then forced me back onto the seat and Kadyrov started twirling the handle again. He repeated this procedure several times, each time inflicting electric shocks on me. After a few minutes, Kadyrov's guards took me back to my cell. Kadyrov always came to the base in the evening (...)."

Mr. Israilov was assassinated in Vienna in January 2009. In June 2011, three men have been convicted by the district court of Vienna, one of them to life-long imprisonment *inter alia* because he was found guilty of acting on behalf of the leadership of the Chechen Republic in the murder of Mr. Israilov, whose family was represented by ECCHR-lawyers in this case. The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg remains seized of this case on alleged acts of torture by Mr. Kadyrov personally and his security guards.

ECCHR also filed a criminal complaint on charges of torture and attempted duress against Mr. Kadyrov with the Austrian Prosecutor's Office in June 2008, in which an investigation is still pending.

Chechnya continues to constitute a situation where serious violations of human rights are continuously committed by the Chechen authorities, as found in the latest report of the Council of Europe. Mr. Kadyrov's policy promotes the state of constant fear among the population and political opponents. Within Chechnya there is a total impunity for Kadyrov's forces and opponents were killed and are threatened in various countries in Europe and the Middle East. We would like to refer you to Mr. Kadyrov's profile on Wikipedia, but also on recent reports of international human rights organizations about the situation in Chechnya, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or the International Federation of Human Rights.

Events such as the one on 5 October are nothing but propaganda and self-promotion of the President. In the past, participants regretted having attended similar events. With regards to a football gala of a show team by Mr. Kadyrov and the Brazilian World Cup winning team of 1994 in Grozny in March 2011, the Brazilian football star Rai admitted that he was "ashamed" of his appearance in Grozny (see his full public letter <http://www.rai10.com.br/br/?p=3499>). He wrote "I admit that a complete lack of information lead to my careless agreement to this adventure (...). Looking back, I can only say that I did a stupid thing, when I went there to play. I learnt two important lessons in that trip: I will follow political processes in Russia and Chechnya more closely and I will be more careful. I can say that, at the very least, it was an important experience for me."

On the same lines, the French Federation of Football addressed a warning to the player Alain Boghossian concerning his participation in another event in Grozny on the occasion of the inauguration of the new football stadium in May 2011 (see open letter by Human Rights Watch France to French football stars after the event:

[http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/05/26/match-de-gala-a-grozny-messieurs-les-footballeurs-renvoyez-vos-montres\\_1527370\\_3232.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/05/26/match-de-gala-a-grozny-messieurs-les-footballeurs-renvoyez-vos-montres_1527370_3232.html)).

Attending such an event on invitation of Mr. Kadyrov would disregard the seriousness of the situation with regards to his authoritarian ruling and the violation of fundamental human rights in the Chechen Republic. Therefore, we urge you not to attend the aforementioned event.

Sincerely Yours,