



## **Chechen man who apologized for coming out gay says he was forced to apologize**

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A Chechen man who came out in a *Time* interview, then apologized on national television, now says he was coerced into making the statement.

Movsar Eskarkhanov fled to Germany seeking asylum to escape the persecution he faced in Chechnya for being gay.

*Time* published its story as details about an ongoing gay purge in Chechnya surfaced. According to those reports, later confirmed by Human Rights Watch, authorities in the conservative Russian republic rounded up dozens of men suspected of being gay and tortured them in secret prisons. Authorities would then tell the families of the men that they were detained because of their sexual orientation, which would set off additional attacks and, in some cases, honor killings.

The violence that chased Eskarkhanov out of Russia also followed him to Germany, where Chechens, upon learning that he was gay, attacked him.

From a refugee shelter on the outskirts of Berlin, [Eskarkhanov told \*Time\*](#) that he wanted to tell his story to the world "before somebody kills me."

"[F]or gay Chechens it doesn't matter where we go," he said. "We can go to Mars. If there are other Chechens there, they will never let us live in peace."

Eskarkhanov then fell off the radar. He reappeared a few months later on state television to apologize for "disgracing" Chechnya. In his November 13 apology, he said that he had been under the influence of epilepsy medication.

On Monday, Eskarkhanov said that he was forced to make the statement.

"They made it clear that if I continue to talk, there would be problems," he told the Kavkazsky Uzel news website.

"They said that I must first think about my family. I was also told that if I continue to speak again, I would have problems," Eskarkhanov said on Russian-language channel RTVI, [The Moscow Times reported](#).