

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	585
Land:	Rusland
Kilde:	ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation
Titel:	Featured topic on the Russian Federation: General Security Situation and Events in Dagestan
Udgivet:	13. januar 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. maj 2020

Document #2022551

ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and
Asylum Research and Documentation

ecoi.net featured topic on the Russian Federation: General Security Situation and Events in Dagestan

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1. Overview

“Mit rund drei Millionen Einwohnern ist es die mit Abstand größte kaukasische Teilrepublik, und wegen seiner Lage am Kaspischen Meer bildet es für Russland einen strategisch wichtigen Teil dieser Region. Zugleich leben hier auf einem Territorium von der Größe Bayerns drei Dutzend autochthone Nationalitäten. Damit ist Dagestan das Gebiet mit der größten ethnischen Vielfalt nicht nur im Kaukasus, sondern im gesamten postsowjetischen Raum.” (SWP, April 2015, p. 5-6 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/302752>))[i]

“Dagestan is now considered both Russia's most ethnically diverse republic and the region where Islam is most deeply rooted. More than 90 percent of the population is Muslim – 97 percent are Sunni and 3 percent are Shia. Sufism, which emphasizes the mystical dimension of Islam has long been practiced in the North Caucasus and is deeply entwined with Dagestani identity.” (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 14 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))[ii]

2. Religious conflict

“Значительное влияние на разные стороны общественной жизни Дагестана оказывает ислам. [...] Традиционно население здесь исповедовало различные тарикаты (пути) суфийского направления в исламе. До сих пор большинство верующих в республике придерживаются именно этого направления. [...] С 90-х годов прошлого века в республике начало активно распространяться новое для

Кавказа религиозное течение – салафизм, или фундаменталистский ислам.” (Memorial, 4 September 2012, p. 8 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/242284>)) [iii]

“Islam is the majority’s religion, especially in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, where the internal factors of the umma (Islamic community) have an increasingly profound impact on society. Most of the region’s Muslims follow a form of Islam perceived as ‘traditional’ in the region because it is deeply interwoven with local customs, practices and beliefs. The east has a strong tradition of Sufism, whose brotherhoods (tariqas) have been in conflict with the Salafis for over a decade. [...] Traditional Muslims are more successfully integrated into the Russian secular system and recognise its institutions and law; their religious boards have become semi-government institutions.” (ICG, 19 October 2012, p. 2 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/229353>)) [iv]

“Салафиты, которых часто неточно называют ваххабитами, не признают святых и учителей, считая их наличие нарушением принципа единобожия в исламе. Они не признают вкраплений в религиозную практику народных традиций, выступают за упрощение обрядности и буквальное толкование Корана. [...] В Дагестане, в отличие от Чечни, где конфликт начинался как сепаратистский, раскол был изначально как политическим, так и религиозным. [...] В 90-х годах XX века конфликт, тогда еще не вооруженный, происходил как внутри исламских общин в населенных пунктах, так и между представителями духовенства: Духовного управления мусульман Республики Дагестан с одной стороны и лидерами салафитов – с другой. Одновременно нарастало давление на салафитов со стороны государственных силовых структур.” (Memorial, 4 September 2012, p. 8-9 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/242284>))

“Towards the end of the decade, the Salafi movement began to spread throughout Dagestan, bringing religious conflict between Sufis and Salafis. By late 1996, the official religious establishment, dominated by Sufi leaders, grew openly hostile to Salafi adherents. Said Muhammad Haji Abubakarov, then head of the pro-government, official Muslim Spiritual Board, made a speech in which he said that ‘any Muslim who kills a Wahhabi will enter Paradise.’” (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 15 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

“On August 7, 1999, fighters closely linked to Magomedov invaded Dagestan with a group of 1,500-2,000 armed Arab, Chechen, and Dagestani fighters [...] In September 1999, federal authorities began to pursue individuals suspected of involvement in or supporting the August 1999 incursion from Chechnya. This marked the beginning of a concerted, multi-year campaign in which the net was cast widely to include suspected Islamist extremists.” (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 16 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

“После событий 1999 года государство стало привлекать к уголовной ответственности участников и пособников нападения на Дагестан. Тогда же Народное Собрание РД приняло закон ‘О запрете ваххабистской и иной экстремистской деятельности на территории Республики Дагестан’. Внятного определения ‘ваххабизма’, да и ‘экстремизма’, в этом законе нет. В правовом

смысле его последствия ничтожны. Однако этот закон создал предпосылки для репрессий: фактически каждый, кто по субъективной оценке сотрудника правоохранительных органов мог быть причислен к приверженцам ‚ваххабизма‘, становился жертвой милицейского произвола. Произошло смешение уголовно-правового и религиозного понятий: борьба с терроризмом фактически превратилась в борьбу с приверженцами ‚ваххабизма‘ как религиозного течения.” (Memorial, 4 September 2012, p. 9-10 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/242284>))

“For almost a decade after the second Chechen war began, Dagestan authorities made no distinction between moderate and radical, violence-oriented Salafis, which contributed to radicalisation of the entire community.” (ICG, 19 October 2012, p. 9 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/229353>))

“A survey in Dagestan has found that 20 percent of the republic’s youth consider themselves moderate Salafis. Only 10 percent of the respondents referred to themselves as Sufis – traditionally the main Muslim branch in Dagestan. The most educated among those who identified themselves as moderate Salafis said they were in favor of mimicking the experience of such countries as Brunei, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman in bringing norms of sharia into governance in Dagestan. The survey also found that 12 percent of the respondents favor the radical methods of struggle adopted by the North Caucasus militants. It is especially striking that young people openly stated support for rebels in the republic. According to a Dagestani expert on Islam, Ruslan Gereyev, the survey was conducted only in cities, and support for the rebels would have been even higher had the interviews been conducted in rural areas of the republic (www.kavkaz-uzel.ru, December 9).” (Jamestown Foundation, 14 December 2011 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/216670>))[v]

“Весной и летом 2012 года начался диалог и между находившимися в конфликте суфиями и салафитами.” (Memorial, 4 September 2012, p. 5 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/242284>))

“The dialogue may have come close to its end with the killing of Sheikh Said Afandi, the most influential sheikh in the North Caucasus, by a newly converted Islamist in his home on 28 August 2012. [...] When the moderate Salafi organisation condemned the killing and called for continuation of dialogue, insurgents threatened its leaders. The leader of the Caucasus Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz), Doku Umarov, made a video asserting that Sufis who do not cooperate with the authorities are ‘brothers in Islam’ and invited them to join jihad.” (ICG, 19 October 2012, p. 3-12 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/229353>))

“Unter Abdulatipow ist der unter seinem Vorgänger Magomedsalam Magomedow erfolgreich installierte Dialog zwischen traditionellen Sunniten und einem gemäßigten Flügel der Salafisten zum Erliegen gekommen. Stattdessen nimmt die staatliche Repression zu.” (AI, October 2013 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/258841>))[vi]

“With the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games fast approaching, in late 2013 the authorities opted for more ‘heavy-handed security policies in the North Caucasus.’ Law enforcement agencies in Dagestan boosted their efforts to control Salafi communities. Police started rounding up, photographing, fingerprinting, and questioning Salafis, and placing them on ‘extremist’ watch lists, a process colloquially known as ‘Wahhabi registration [uchet vakhabitov or vakhuchet].” (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 42 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

“Over the past few months most Salafi civic activity in Dagestan has been pushed underground. Moderate leaders have been harassed; some have fled the republic and their projects been closed. The Salafi human rights group ‘Pravozashchita’, which publicised abuses, was targeted, its leaders detained or placed under surveillance and an activist’s home searched. Its outspoken representative in Buynaksk was arrested and, human rights groups said, a criminal case fabricated against her. Since late 2013, the police have been detaining Salafis en masse from cafés, mosques, and homes.” (ICG, 30 January 2014, p. 7-8 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/268585>))

“Mass arrests of Muslims in mosques have become a hallmark of the Dagestani head Ramazan Abdulatipov’s policies. [...] However, some experts say the mass arrests are part of a campaign of harassment against some categories of Muslims in Dagestan and a step backward in the dialogue between religious groups. [...] According to Akhmet Yarlykapov, a Moscow-based expert of Dagestani origin, up to 50 percent of the republic’s Muslims do not subordinate to the official Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan, which is dominated by the Sufi branch of Islam.” (Jamestown Foundation, 19 May 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/303012>))

“Salafi Muslim communities in Dagestan were subject to intense scrutiny and harassment as law enforcement largely equated them with insurgents or their collaborators. Authorities placed Salafis on watch lists, repeatedly detained and questioned many of them without specific grounds; raided Salafi mosques; and carried out mass detentions of believers. They closed several Salafi mosques, including in Makhachkala, Dagestan’s capital.” (HRW, 12 January 2017 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/334746>))

“In anderen Republiken wie Inguschetien und Dagestan wurde versucht, einen Dialog zwischen Regierung und offizieller Geistlichkeit auf der einen Seite und islamistischer Opposition auf der Gegenseite zu führen. Derzeit befindet sich die Regierung in Dagestan aber wieder in Konfrontation mit salafistischen Gemeinden und hat an die 100 000 Personen, vor allem junge Männer, auf eine ‘Wahhabiten-Liste’ gesetzt. Der ‘Krieg gegen Wahhabiten’, der dort schon 1999 ausgerufen worden war, hat allerdings dazu geführt, dass immer mehr junge Leute sich zu einem puristischen, streng konservativen Islam bekennen.” (SWP, April 2017, p. 4 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1396963>))

“In June, authorities stated that the Interior Ministry for Dagestan, in the south of Russia, was no longer placing ‘adherents of non-traditional Islam’ on police watchlists. However, persecution of Salafi Muslims, including arbitrary detentions and harassment, continued.” (HRW, 18 January 2018 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1422501.html>))

3. Development of the insurgency in Dagestan

"Islamist militancy in Dagestan rose in the mid-1990's, when links developed between Chechen separatist warlords and Dagestan's Salafi religious community. Ideas of jihad, or holy war, in Dagestan can be traced to 1992, when Bagautdin Magomedov (Kebedov), who came to be known as 'the father of the Dagestani jihad,' established a Quranic school in Kizilyurt, a town in Dagestan. By 1996, he explicitly called for holy war against the 'infidels.' [...] In the period between the two Chechen wars, from 1997 to 1999, Islamists shuttled between the two republics. On August 7, 1999, fighters closely linked to Magomedov invaded Dagestan with a group of 1,500-2,000 armed Arab, Chechen, and Dagestani fighters, supposedly to support Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi, two self-declared 'Sharia [Islamic law] mini-states' influenced by Magomedov's teachings. Russian troops eventually drove out the militant forces and a month later launched large-scale military operations in Chechnya, which became the second Chechen war. The Republic of Dagestan remained a volatile site of insurgency thereafter. [...] In September 1999, federal authorities began to pursue individuals suspected of involvement in or supporting the August 1999 incursion from Chechnya. This marked the beginning of a concerted, multi-year campaign in which the net was cast widely to include suspected Islamist extremists. Hundreds were arrested. According to the Russian human rights organization Memorial Human Rights Center, the authorities tortured numerous detainees held in this campaign. Abduction-style detentions also became widespread. The majority of those abducted were Salafis." (HRW, 18. Juni 2015, p. 15-16 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

"The Republic of Dagestan has become the principal scene of all the North Caucasian resistance movement in the past two years." (Jamestown Foundation, 17 May 2012 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/221940>))

"With the Kremlin's appointment of Magomedsalam Magomedov as president of Dagestan in February 2010, the republic's leadership launched a new, diversified effort to stabilize the republic. Magomedov spoke of the need for political change and pledged to modernize Dagestan's economy, fight corruption, and encourage outside investment. He also promised a fresh approach toward tackling the insurgency, by stressing the importance of dialogue and guaranteeing the safety of militants who wished to return to 'normal human life.'" (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 19 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

"In mid-March, a massive redeployment of military personnel from Chechnya to Dagestan took place. According to unofficial sources from Dagestan, up to 20,000-25,000 troops were moved to the neighboring republic. A military column including large amounts of armored fighting vehicles set out from Khankala, a military base to the east of Grozny, to the Karabudakhkent district of Dagestan on the outskirts of the capital city of Makhachkala." (CACI, 4 April 2012 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/213796>))[vii]

"Starting in early October, troops of the Russian Ministry of Defense are again participating in the counterinsurgency campaign in the North Caucasus. [...] In fact, Moscow is actively strengthening its military presence in the region, with a particular

focus on Dagestan. In the spring months of 2012, it deployed up to 25,000 MVD police units to Dagestan, the majority of which had previously been stationed in Chechnya. The recent decision to deploy army units to Dagestan seems to have been made in August or September and confirms that the success of the MVD troops has been limited. Indeed, the police units recruited from all over the Russian Federation and deployed to Dagestan for only a few months have proven incapable of grasping the peculiarities of local counterinsurgency warfare. In addition, the death toll on MVD troops deployed in the Dagestan campaign has increased steadily in recent months." (CACI, 14 November 2012 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/232180>))

"In January 2013, Putin replaced Magomedov by appointing Ramazan Abdulatipov as Dagestan's leader. A clear toughening of counterinsurgency strategy largely coincided with the June 2013 call by Caucasus Emirate leader Doku Umarov for 'maximum force' to attempt to prevent the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi did from taking place. The Dagestani presidential administration ceased efforts to foster ties with and integrate non-militant Salafis and instead presided over a crackdown on Salafi communities." (HRW, 18 June 2015, p. 21 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/305566>))

"Hopes for improvement of the security situation in Dagestan gradually dissipate as attacks intensify in the republic. In spite of an anti-corruption campaign introduced by Dagestan's new acting president, harsher government tactics appear to be matched by more exasperated attacks by the militants, while new anti-insurgency jamaats are formed to avenge the casualties of terrorist attacks." (CACI, 12 June 2013 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/254727>))

"On October 22, government forces deployed in Dagestan's mountains were significantly reinforced when at least 500 servicemen arrived in the district of Untsukul. Government forces will reportedly also be sent to other districts in Dagestan's mountainous region to improve the deteriorating security situation in the area." (Jamestown Foundation, 28 October 2013 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/261412>))

"In 2013, the total number of victims of the armed conflict in Northern Caucasus decreased as compared to 2012 by 239 people, or by 19.5%. The death toll went down from 700 in 2012 to 529 in 2013, i.e., by 24.4%; the number of wounded persons – from 525 to 457 (by 13%). However losses among civilians went up. [...] In 2013, the highest count of victims was recorded in Dagestan – 641 persons, including 341 people killed and 300 others wounded." (Caucasian Knot, 31 January 2014 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/269342>))[viii]

"Nearly 70 percent of all militant attacks and victims of such attacks in the North Caucasus take place in the Republic of Dagestan. The center of the region's political struggle also moved to Dagestan last year, which was connected to the fact that a Dagestani emir, Abu Muhammad (Aliaskhab Kebekov), replaced the deceased Doku Umarov as leader of the Caucasus Emirate. The new Caucasus Emirate emir endorsed the head of al-Qaeda, Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri (Hunafa.com, June 23, 2014). By supporting al-Zawahiri, Abu Muhammad collided with the leadership of the IS and those

North Caucasians fighting under the flag of its leader, Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.” (Jamestown Foundation, 9 January 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/294158>))

“In 2014, Northern Caucasus saw a dramatic reduction of the number of victims of the armed conflict. [...] The statistics for Dagestan, which remained the leader in the number of victims among the regions of Northern Caucasus, shows that the republic preserved its leadership in 2014, except for Quarter 4, when Chechnya had more victims than Dagestan. However, in Dagestan, in 2014, the number of killed and wounded persons went down by 54.3%. The total number of victims of the conflict decreased from 641 people (of which 341 people were killed and at least 300 wounded) in 2013 down to 293 people, including 208 killed and 85 wounded. The number of victims of terror acts dropped 9.9-fold as compared with 2013.” (Caucasian Knot, 31 January 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/298693>))

“On April 19, 2015, the Caucasus Emirate’s leader Aliaskhab Kebekov, nom de guerre Ali Abu Mukhammad, was killed in a special operation carried out by Russian elite forces in Dagestan’s Buynaksk district. His death came at a time of profound decline of the North Caucasian jihadists, coupled with the ongoing split in their ranks as an increasing number of fighters and insurgent leaders turn to the Islamic State (IS). (CACI, 29 April 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/302498>))

“Magomed Suleimanov (Abu Usman of Gimry), a Sharia militants’ judge and the leader of the armed underground in Dagestan, has been appointed the new leader of the ‘Imarat Kavkaz’ recognized in Russia as a terrorist organization.” (Caucasian Knot, 28 May 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/306080>))

“The leader of the North-Caucasian branch of the ‘Islamic State’ (IS), which has been recognized as a terrorist organization, is the Dagestani commander Abu Mukhammad (Rustam Asildarov). [...] The ‘Caucasian Knot’ has reported that on June 21 a message was posted on the YouTube that militants of four vilayets of the so-called ‘Imarat Kavkaz’, which is regarded in Russia as a terrorist organization, swore their allegiance to Abu-Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of the above IS (earlier named as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant – ISIL). The IS has taken the oath of North-Caucasian militants and announced the establishment of its branch in the region.” (Caucasian Knot, 25 June 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/307080>))

“While observers focused on the shift from the Caucasus Emirate to the Islamic State in the North Caucasus, the news that a single amir from the team of the slain CE leader took an oath of allegiance to the CE went almost unnoticed. The rebel leader who remained loyal to the CE is Said Abu Muhammad Arakinsky, the group’s amir of Dagestan (Kavkazsky Uzel, December 29, 2014).” (Jamestown Foundation, 9 July 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/307313>))

“Despite these setbacks, the CE tried to survive and started to form new military structures in Dagestan (see EDM, August 6). An impression emerged that the two rebel organizations, the CE and the IS, would compete with each other for the right to represent the armed Islamic resistance movement in the region. However, what

happened in recent days may change everything: the CE did not simply suffer another round of losses, but lost three of its top commanders, including the leader of the organization. [...] Among the rebels killed was new CE leader Abu Usman Gimrinsky (Magomed Suleimanov), an Untsukul district native. Two other well-known commanders were reportedly also killed—Said Arakansky (Kamil Saidov), amir of the Dagestani Velayat, and Abu Dujan (Abdulla Abdullaev), amir of the Mountainous Sector of the Dagestani Velayat, (Kavpolit.com, August 11). Thus, practically all the top leaders of the Caucasus Emirate were wiped out. Within hours of the incident, the websites that represent the CE confirmed the death of the group's leadership (Kavkazcenter.com, August 11)." (Jamestown Foundation, 14 August 2015 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/310753>))

"Auch in Dagestan, der Hauptkrisenregion des Nordkaukasus, sanken die Zahlen: 2014 mindestens 208 Getötete, 2013 noch 271 und im Jahr zuvor 410. Dieser Trend hielt im Jahr 2015 an: Laut der russischen Internetzeitung Caucasian Knot wurden im Nordkaukasus mindestens 209 Menschen – davon rund 135 in Dagestan – getötet. Ursache für den erheblichen Rückgang dürfte sein, dass sich seit 2015 vermehrt Kämpfer aus dem Nordkaukasus dem IS in Syrien und im Irak angeschlossen haben." (BAMF, 25 January 2016, p.4 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/318288>))[ix]

"According to Dagestan's governor, Ramazan Abdulatipov, only 643 residents of the republic are fighting in the ranks of the IS. Dagestani Interior Minister Abdurashid Magomedov estimated the number of Dagestani IS recruits at 900 as of December 2015 (Kavkazsky Uzel, December 10, 2015). Abdulatipov must have meant only those individuals who went to Syria and whose involvement in insurgent activities has been confirmed. The Russian Ministry of Interior claims that jointly with the Federal Security Service (FSB), it is monitoring over 2,800 Russian citizens who went to fight in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the interior ministry launched criminal investigations into 889 militants who returned from the Middle East." (Jamestown Foundation, 8 January 2016 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/317552>))

"In an attempt to decrease tensions in the North Caucasus, the Russian authorities set out to register all potential extremists who might carry out a terrorist attack, in the opinion of the police and the Federal Security Service (FSB). Since the start of 2016, reports started to emerge detailing the number of extremists and their locations. In Dagestan alone, the authorities reportedly registered 14,000 people as potential extremists (Riadagestan.ru, March 3). According to the Prosecutor General's Office of Dagestan, the authorities registered at least 15,000 potential extremists (Chernovik.net, March 1). A member of the Council for Human Rights under the President of Russia, Maksim Shevchenko, says the Dagestani authorities registered about 100,000 people as potentially unreliable (Echo.msk.ru, February 25)." (Jamestown Foundation, 24 March 2016 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/321651>))

"Violence continued in the North Caucasus republics, driven by separatism, interethnic conflict, jihadist movements, vendettas, criminality, excesses by security forces, and the activity of terrorists. Media reported that in 2015 the total number of deaths and injuries due to the conflicts in the North Caucasus decreased significantly compared with 2014 in all republics of the North Caucasus. According to human rights activists in

the region, violence in Dagestan continued at a high level. Dagestan remained the most violent area in the North Caucasus, with approximately 60 percent of all casualties in the region in 2015. Local media described the level of violence in Dagestan as the result of Islamic militant insurgency tactics continuing from the Chechen conflict as well as of the high level of organized crime in the region.” (USDOS, 3 March 2017 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/337201>))[x]

Caucasian Knot reports 140 casualties and 64 wounded in 2016 in Dagestan. (Caucasian Knot, 2 February 2017 (<https://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/38325/>))

“Officials in Makhachkala, Dagestan’s capital, recently estimated there are 1,200 Dagestanis fighting for IS in Syria, while deaths from the conflict in Dagestan rose 33 percent in 2016 (Caucasian Knot, January 31).” (Jamestown Foundation, 10 February 2017 (<http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/336900>))

“At the end of December and following Vladimir Putin’s premature declaration of victory in Syria (see EDM, December 14, 2017), Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that the militant underground in the North Caucasus had been liquidated—a claim even less justified than the president’s pronouncement about Syria (Vz.ru, December 19, 2017). [...]

Official assertions that the conflict was over were contradicted not only by experts but by the actions of both the militants and the Russian forces. Indeed, the former have been attacking in places where they had not been active before, such as Stavropol and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, as well as in Dagestan, where the militancy has continued throughout the year.” (Jamestown Foundation, 9 January 2018 (/en/document/1421338.html))

“In 2017, an overall decrease in the number of victims to the armed conflict in the regions of Northern Caucasian occurred against the backdrop of an increase in the number of civilian casualties. This is evidenced by the calculations run by the ‘Caucasian Knot’. [...] The decrease in the number of victims to the armed conflict in Northern Caucasus may be associated with an improvement in the situation in Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. In 2017, the above republics maintained the tendency to a decrease in the number of victims and armed incidents. So, in 2017, in Dagestan, the number of victims to the armed conflict decreased by 149 people (from 204 down to 55) in comparison with 2016. The decrease in the number of armed incidents can be explained by the fact that in 2017, according to reports of the law enforcement bodies, leaders of several militant groups were killed. Meanwhile, it cannot be argued that all of them really stayed at high positions in the hierarchy of militants.” (Caucasian Knot, 14 March 2018 (/en/document/1427130.html))

“The Dagestan government places the exact number of Dagestani returnees from jihad in Syria or Iraq at 108 since 2014, with 86 under criminal investigation. [...] Kadyrov’s government, meanwhile, in contrast to neighbouring Dagestan, has proclaimed a ‘safe corridor’ for women returning from Syria.” (ICG, 26 March 2018 (/en/document/1427995.html))

"The past few years have seen violence increase again, however, as the insurgency in Dagestan has evolved – although levels of bloodshed remain considerably lower than during the peak years (47 people were killed in armed conflict in 2017, compared to 413 in 2011). [...] The nature of the insurgency also appears to have changed. The network of often sizeable and seasoned insurgent groups of several years ago has been replaced by small, diffuse and concealed bands or ' sleeper cells ', often comprising only a handful of recruits. According to a defence lawyer in Khasavyurt: ' Full-scale recruitment is going on [in detention centres]. Some of my clients, who didn't even pray, have visibly radicalised. They told me about the peer pressure there, how they were brainwashed '." (ICG, 5 July 2018 (/en/document/1440701.html))

"In total, according to the "Caucasian Knot", in 2018, 49 people fell victim to the armed conflict in Dagestan, of which 36 people were killed and 13 were wounded. [...] Statistics shows that the majority, 75%, of all those killed in the conflict in Dagestan were counted as militants (27 deaths out of 36 in total)." (Caucasian Knot, 2 February 2019 (/en/document/1457453.html))

"Law enforcers have achieved a 'significant breakthrough' in combating the armed underground in Dagestan, but eight militants are still wanted, Abdurashid Magomedov, the head of the Dagestani Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), has announced. On January 14, the head of Dagestan, Vladimir Vasiliev, was present at the extended MIA Collegium, where police bosses have summed up their work in 2018. Abdurashid Magomedov, the Minister, has emphasized the results of the MIA's counterterrorist activities. 'To date, the activities of the bandit groupings that were active in the republic are virtually completely suppressed. Eight members of the [armed] underground, who are reportedly hiding abroad, remain on the wanted list,' the website of the Dagestani MIA quotes the Minister as saying." (Caucasian Knot, 15 January 2019 (/en/dokument/1456360.html))

"Despite the decrease of the terrorist threat, the likelihood of new attacks undertaken by single terrorists persists in Dagestan, journalists and political analysts have stated.

The 'Caucasian Knot' has reported that on March 20, Magomed Baachilov, the head of the Dagestani branch of the 'Rosgvardia' (Russian National Guard), announced the absence of active members of the armed underground in the republic." (Caucasian Knot, 24 March 2019 (/en/dokument/2005467.html))

Further information on human rights violations committed by both sides of the conflict can be found in the archived versions of featured topic in the subchapter "Attacks and violations of human rights".

4. Timeline of attacks in Dagestan

Please note: Although a lot of information on the Russian Federation is available in Russian language only, currently only selected Russian documents are available on ecoi.net. No Russian language publisher is currently among the sources regularly covered by ecoi.net. The following timeline therefore does not purport to be an exhaustive list of attacks in Dagestan, but shall serve as an overview and introduction to

the subject.

Please also see the archived versions of this featured topic for a timeline for previous years:

For 2011, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/220655> (/en/document/220655)

For 2012, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/242518> (/en/document/242518)

For 2013, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/270091> (/en/document/270091)

For 2014, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/293185> (/en/document/293185)

For 2015, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/323719> (/en/document/323719)

For 2016, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/339024> (/en/document/339024)

For 2017, see <http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/358745> (/en/document/358745)

For 2018, see <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2001764> (/en/document/2001764)

2019

June

"On June 22, two residents of Makhachkala were killed in a shootout between the villages of Andirei and Karlanyurt in the Khasavyurt District. According to the Russian National Antiterrorist Committee (NAC), the casualties were supporters of the 'Islamic State' (IS), a terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation by the court." (Caucasian Knot, 11 September 2019 (/en/document/2016346.html))

May

"On May 24, in the course of a counterterrorist operation (CTO) conducted in the Kizilyurt District of Dagestan, when inspecting a private house in the village of Sultan-Yangi-Yurt, a group of armed persons shelled law enforcers. Three militants were killed by return fire. Automatic firearms and ammunition were found in the venue. The casualties were not local residents, the head of the village has stated." (Caucasian Knot, 27 May 2019 (/en/document/2009805.html))

February

"A militant who was plotting a terror act was killed during a shootout with law enforcers in the Derbent District of Dagestan, the National Antiterrorist Committee (NAC) announced and reported on the completion of the counterterrorist operation (CTO). The 'Caucasian Knot' has reported that the CTO legal regime has been introduced today in the Derbent District of Dagestan. Sources from the law enforcement bodies reported a shootout with militants cordoned off in a house in the village of Belidji." (Caucasian Knot, 19 February 2019 (/en/document/1458276.html))

January

"In the Karabudakhkent District of Dagestan, law enforcers have killed three persons, who attacked a post of the road-and-patrol service (known as DPS), the Russian National Antiterrorist Committee (NAC) has reported. On Friday, January 11, three men, who arrived in a car, attacked a DPS post in the Kizilyurt-Makhachkala section of the

'Kavkaz' Highway. Policemen began pursuing the car and caught up with it near the village of Agachaul. In response to the demand to lay down arms, the criminals opened fire on the policemen; as a result of a shootout, the three attackers were shot dead, the 'Interfax' reports with reference to the NAC." (Caucasian Knot, 12 January 2019 (/en/document/1456353.html))

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[i] The German Institute for International and Security Affairs of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) is an independent scientific establishment that conducts practically oriented research on the basis of which it then advises the Bundestag (the German parliament) and the federal government on foreign and security policy issues.

[ii] Human Rights Watch (HRW) is an international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights.

[iii] Memorial is an independent non-governmental group encompassing more than 80 national and regional organisations in 7 countries and, since its formation in 1988, has the objective of accounting for political prisoners and victims of the Stalin era. Over recent years Memorial has developed a network for reporting ongoing human rights violations in the Russian Federation and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

[iv] The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a transnational non-profit, non-governmental organisation that carries out field research on violent conflict and advances policies to prevent, mitigate or resolve conflict.

[v] The Jamestown Foundation is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organisation that provides information on terrorism, the former Soviet republics, Chechnya, China, and North Korea.

[vi] Amnesty International (AI) is a non-governmental organisation focused on human

rights.

[vii] The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (CACI) constitutes together with the Silk Road Studies Program an independent and privately funded Transatlantic Research and Policy Center.

[viii] Caucasian Knot is an internet mass medium with a human rights orientation, that provides information on the Caucasus. It was founded in 2001 by the human rights organisation Memorial.

[ix] The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is a centre of excellence for migration, integration and asylum. It is responsible for conducting asylum procedures, granting refugee protection and supporting integration nationwide. Its duties also include migration and integration research –it has a legally grounded research mandate to collect analytical information on steering immigration.

[x] The US Department of State (USDOS) is the US federal executive department responsible for the international relations of the United States, equivalent to the foreign ministry of other countries.

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Cite as:

ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation: ecoi.net featured topic on the Russian Federation: General Security Situation and Events in Dagestan, 13 January 2020

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/countries/russian-federation/featured-topics/general-security-situation-and-events-in-dagestan/> (/en/countries/russian-federation/featured-topics/general-security-situation-and-events-in-dagestan/)

ecoi.net summary:

Brief compilation on security-related events in Dagesgtan (starting January 2019)



Country:

Russian Federation

Source:

[ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation \(/en/source/10979.html\)](https://www.ecoi.net/en/source/10979.html)

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

13 January 2020

Document ID:

2022551

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

