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CENTER FOR SECURITY AND SCIENCE

North Caucasus Baseline Project: Adygea

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Executive Summary

As of 2007, there are few signs that the Muslim community of the Adygea Republic embraces the radical Islamic tendencies seen in other parts of the North Caucasus. There is no reason to suppose that the socio-political situation in the republic is being aggravated by the Islamic revival in places such as Chechnya.

Yet, there are trends that threaten to change this. The influx of Middle Eastern men, especially Muslim clerics, who visit the region on a regular basis, is a source of popular unease. Given the fact many Muslims in Adygea distrust the local clergy, the Middle Eastern missionaries working in the republic may eventually enlist support for radical Islam.

The Adygh people are more likely to define themselves in terms of ethnicity than in terms of their religious affiliations. This factor mitigates possible tensions emerging from appeals by radical outsiders hoping to exploit the distrust of local clergy.

The rigid social, economic, and political divisions between the Muslim and the Russian communities offer potential for future sectarian disruptions. The Nalchik violence of 2005 also led to police actions that local Muslims interpreted as persecution.

Finally, although the proposal was dropped in March, 2006, the debate over a possible merger with Krasnodar sharpened differences between these groups. The threatened resignation of Adygea President Khasret Sovmen, who opposed the merger, is a factor in Islamic perceptions that they are being persecuted.

On balance, Adygea represents a peaceful contrast with other republics in the North Caucasus. Separatism is not a factor and there is a general recognition that without membership in the Russian Federation Adygea wouldn't be able to survive.

Introduction

Once known as the Cherkess (Adygh) Autonomous Oblast, Adygea was re-designated as the Republic of Adygea in 1992. Little known outside the frontiers of post-communist Russia, Adygea lies on the perimeter of the turbulent North Caucasus region. Adygea has not appeared in news reports about violence and most people in this small republic enjoy lives of relative tranquility if not prosperity. Yet residents of Adygea acknowledge that tension and a vague sense of unease are becoming familiar characteristics of daily life. The Russian and Muslim communities are sharply divided. Especially in its main city, Maykop, Russians express concern about an Islamic community that keeps to itself and reluctantly interacts with the Russian majority only when absolutely necessary. Moreover, visitors from the Middle East, an increasingly common phenomenon, constitute a reminder of the fact that the Islamic tribes of Adygea are not part of the mainstream of this otherwise idyllic community.

Map of Adygea and region

General Information on the Population Structure

At present time the Adygh Republic has a population of 446,000 people and is fairly evenly divided between rural and urban dwellers. Its rural population is about 242,600 thousand people while 207,900 thousand people live in urban areas. The urban population is concentrated in two towns – Maykop and Adygheisk.

Approximately one fourth of the population is composed of people over the active working age. This is 10% higher than Russia's national average. The only population growth over the past several years has been a result of the migration of elderly people. As a result, the aging of the population has been constant and irreversible. Consequently, 26% of the population in the Republic is not involved in the process of production and is dependent on pensions from an increasingly hard pressed local administration. In this bleak environment, it is not surprising that many younger people leave the Republic and move to central Russia and neighboring territories such as Krasnodar or Stavropol.

Adyghea is a multinational republic in which more than 100 nationalities are represented. Its dominant ethnic groups are:

Russian – 68.4%
Adygh– 22.9%
Ukrainian – 3.2%
Armenian – 2.7%
Tatar – 0.7%
Byelorussian – 0.6%
Others – 1.5%

Penetration and Historical Development of Islam in Adygea

Traditional Circassian clothing

Islam was developed on the territory of the Adygh Republic within the context of its broader penetration of the North-West Caucasus. This phenomenon can be nominally divided into several stages.

The first stage began in the seventh century with its penetration of the North Caucasus and lasted until the formation of the Crimean Khanate and expansion of the Turkish Empire into the territories on the Black Sea shore. During this period Islamic influence on the Adygh population was very insignificant and, for the most part, the Adygh people were pagans. But when Islam became the official religion of the Golden Horde, local Islamic influence became stronger as the Adygh tribes were subjugated to the Golden Horde. At that time Circassia had no contacts with powerful Islamic states and most of its interactions were limited to the Byzantine Empire and other Christian states. Consequently, during that period both paganism and Christianity were much stronger than Islam.

The period of Islamic consolidation in Adygea began in the 15th century after the formation of the Crimean Khanate. This coincided with the beginning of the Turkish expansion in the Black Sea coastal region. Eventually, Islamic pressure forced the Italian colonies out of the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea and, as a result, Circassia found itself completely surrounded by Islamic states and Muslim populations. Muslims gained control over the major trade routes and commercial centers thus making the Adygh people dependent on the Islamic community. Because of these conditions Islam gained considerable strength and influence throughout the region.

Finding themselves surrounded by an Islamic sea, the Adygh people were forced to limit their contacts with the Christian states such as Georgia and

Italy. As they gained a foothold in the coastal region, the Turks created a strong Islam center in Anapa. By the 16th century many of the Adygh had converted to Islam. Most of the converts came from the upper-classes of society and were people whose conversions were motivated primarily by political expediency. In the 17th century there were clashes between Adygea's Muslims, especially the new converts, and the Christian Adyghs. As is most often the case, the weak were subdued by the strong and, by this time, the Muslim's enjoyed the dominant position.

Traditional male attire

The seeds of future change were planted in the 16th century when another powerful force appears in the region. The new force was a Russian state newly motivated by the rise of Turkish influence on its southern flank. Upon its entry into the North Caucasus, Russia began its search for allies who would help resist Turkish incursion into what the Czarist regime saw as an area which was vital to Russia's strategic interest.

This development encouraged many political forces in Adygea to adopt a pro-Russian orientation. Yet, Russian's entry into this contest prompted a reaction and by the end of the 18th century there was another wave of Adygh Islamization. This movement was generated by the Russian military presence in the Caucasus and corresponding fears of Russian domination. Thus, in general terms, the most important factor in this wave of Islamization in Adyghea was the Czar's colonialist policy.

In this historical context Islam became the symbol of an anti-czarist and anti-colonialism struggle. Islamic-led anti-Russian sentiments helped consolidate the Adygh tribes in a struggle against the authority of the Czarist government. With this development, a popularly-based Islamic movement represented enjoyed recognition as the alternative to the Russian rule.

Yet, while many among the local accepted the idea of Islam as a political alternative, there was no popular rush to embrace the tenets of Islam as a guide for the daily lives of the Adygh people. The absence of a social revolution to match the Islamic-led struggle against Czarist rule was apparently a function of the fact that so many of Adegea's dogmas were already corresponded to those of the Islamic faith. The Islamic social demands, therefore, were nothing new and required no transformation in the lives of the Adygh people.

For example, it was already viewed as an honor for an Adygh to die in battle. Islamic teachings that such a death represented a guarantee of eternal life in paradise after death did not constitute a new concept that had to be embraced as recognition of an Islamic spiritual reality. Because this concept was a traditional part of Adygh mentality, some people believe that the local people introduced this notion to Islam rather than the other way around. Thus, the changes brought about by Islam were socially insignificant. In fact, what Islam introduced into the life of the Adygh was religious legitimization of many pre-existing notions.

Islam also affected Adygea's social structure by bringing about the Islamization of the upper classes. Political privilege was thus something that existed within a religious context. The common people of Adyghea, however, preferred Shariat dogmas which limited the privileges of the upper classes. However, Muridism, which was adopted in Chechnya, Dagestan and Cherkessia, did not become a part of Adygea's culture. With its demands for an ascetic lifestyle which explicitly rejected music, dancing, and alcohol, Muridism has fueled Islamic fundamentalist tendencies throughout much of the North Caucasus but Adygea has managed to avoid such disruptions.

During the 19th century Caucasian wars with Russia of the many peoples of the North-West Caucasus left their homes and moved to Turkey and various Middle East countries. As a result the population of the North-West Caucasus decreased by five million people and a large Cherkessian Diaspora formed in Turkey and other Middle East countries. In what had been their traditional homelands, the Cherkessians became national minorities and fell under the control of the Czarist administration. For this reason, they had to move closer to Cossack villages in order to enjoy the Czar's protection.

The rise of Islamic power and influence could be seen by the increased number of Muslim communities. At the beginning of the 20th century when Adygea was part of the Kuban Territory, there were 153 communities which were organized under Muslim control.

The steady increase in Islamic power was halted in the early 1920s when Bolshevik power came to the Caucasus. The Bolsheviks instituted religious persecution throughout the region and all Islamic schools and mosques were closed. Without these important Islamic institutions, people were deprived of teachings about the Islamic faith. Eventually, they completely lost familiarity with the tenets of their former religious faith. As elsewhere in the North Caucasus, Islam was vulgarized. Consequently, ethnic

identities and religious faith merged into one common form of popular self-identification.

Islam in Adygea after 1991

Maykop Mosque

One consequence of Gorbachev's reforms of the late 1980s was a move to restore Islam in the Republic of Adygea and give it an important formal status. The re-Islamization of Adygea had an important impact on what might be regarded as the basic features of Soviet Adygea. During the Soviet period, Adygea had become an administrative part of Krasnodar which was one of the most developed territories in the South of Russia. This created opportunities for both the agricultural and industrial development of Adygea. Economic development led to significant changes in the population structure on the territory and the Adygh share of the population fell to 21%. Russians and Ukrainians became the dominant ethnic groups in Adygea.

The re-Islamization of Adygea was accompanied by significant demographic changes. Many Muslims who were part of the indigenous Adygea population left the republic during the Caucasian wars of the 19th century and moved to Turkey and other Middle East countries. With the dramatic changes of the post-Soviet era, many of them returned their historic homeland thus bringing about an increase in the overall Muslim population and a relative demographic decline for those Muslims who stayed throughout the difficult Soviet period.

Among the most numerous returnees are the Kurds, a non-Arab Middle Eastern minority which had been in the republics of the North-East Caucasus and other neighboring regions. Their return was a major factor in the regeneration of Islamic culture in Adygea. After the liberal reforms of the early 1990s, as in many other national republics of the former Soviet Union, there were nationalist calls for cultural revival and a separation from Krasnodar region. There were corresponding demands for Adygh autonomy and a return of the lands which had been "unjustly taken" from the Adygh people. Some Adygh nationalists called for the creation of 'Greater Cherkessia'.

In response to nationalist demands, Adygea was separated from the Krasnodar region in 1991. The local government adopted national goals

that would encourage a revival of the traditional Adygh values, customs, and rules. The restoration of Islam assumed a prominent place among the republic's post-Soviet goals.

The Overseas Adyghs

Another specific feature of the Adygea's re-Islamization was increased contacts and cooperation with the foreign Cherkessian Diaspora, which at that period of time had very strong influence on the Adygh nationalities living in the North Caucasus. The size and strength of this foreign Adygh (or Cherkessian) Diaspora is much greater than the actual number of Adyghs living on the territory of the Russian Federation. In short, their total influence exceeds their actual numbers who live in the Republic of Adygea and is a tribute to the group's international organizational abilities.

About 3.5 million people of Adygh origin live in forty-five countries around the world. In Turkey there are approximately 3 million; in Syria there are 120,000; in Jordan there are 80,000; Egypt has a community of 52,000 while Germany had 35,000 and the United States has 20,000. Most of the Adygh people in these countries form ethnic communities which in their own Adygh language are called «Adygh Hasay». In Turkey the number of such communities is more than 100; in Syria there are six of them; in Jordan there are four; in Germany there are another four while Israel has two and the Netherlands has one. There are two in the United States. In Turkey, Jordan and Syria many Cherkessians occupy important state and social positions and influence the process of making decisions in political, economic and military spheres. Some members of the Cherkessian Diaspora are active in charity and have formed several socio-political organizations dealing with the repatriation of the Adygh people to their historical homeland. Many of the repatriated members of the Adygh Diaspora occupy important positions in religious organizations of the republic.

The main theater in Maykop is a center for the cultivation of Adygh culture and traditions.

Adygea in the Post-communist Era

During the period of democratic reforms Islam regained much of its importance in Adygh society. Currently there are sixteen Islamic religious

groups on the territory of the republic which are registered with Adygea's Ministry of Justice. Muslims of the Adygh and Krasnodar territories have a common Mufti – 65-year old Nurbiy Emizh. He was elected to the position in the autumn of 2002 during a meeting of Muslims from Krasnodar territory and the Adyghea Republic. Nurbiy Emizh had previously served as the Head of the Islamic center of the Adygh Republic.

There is an executive body responsible for coordinating the activities of Adygh and Krasnodar Muslims. Located in Adygea, this is the Spiritual Department of Muslims and is operated by a board consisting of 25 people. It was formed in 1991 during the first large-scale meeting of the Adygh and Krasnodar Muslims including those living on the Black Sea shore in the aul of Adamiy. [1] In 1995 it joined Russian Muslim Union thus gaining access to financial support. Other sources of finance for religious Muslim organizations are donations from various mosques, donations from foreign Islamic organizations, financial support from the government and the parliament of the Adygea Republic. Adygh Muslim societies own dozens of buildings. Each of Adygea's districts and in the city of Maykop there are branches of the Muslim organization *Din Hasay* which is responsible for solving religious disputes. There are two religious newspapers which are published in Adyghea. One is published by the Spiritual Department while the second one is a private publication.

Western view of the Maykop mosque

The Muslim Board and the Maykop and Adygh administration of the Russian Orthodox Church have established a firm cooperative relationship in the years since the collapse of the USSR. On occasion they arrange meetings of the heads of the major religious organizations in order to discuss key questions of inter-confessional and intercultural cooperation and to work out common approaches aimed at strengthening the positions of traditional Russian confessions. Orthodox and Muslim clergy attend all significant events in the social life of the Republic including both Orthodox and Muslim feast days.

The major activities of the Muslim Board are Islamic education, anti-drug and anti-alcohol efforts and the moral education of Muslim citizens. They address such problems as the moral character of young people and the low level of Muslim education and knowledge among the clergy. The latter is

[1] An aul is a village or mountain settlement of Muslims in the Caucasus or Central Asia

especially important because, Muslim leaders say, it often leads to incorrect and unsound interpretations of the Koran and to contentious debates about Muslim theology.

One of the most important activities of the Spiritual Department is the construction of mosques. Another prominent activity is the advancement of Islam thought through regular meetings of Muslim leaders with residents of Adygea and Krasnodar to discuss problems associated with the revival of Islam. In order to advance this work they rely upon the mass media. Local television stations broadcast programs dedicated to religion and the Mufti frequently gives lectures on the main tenets of Islam.

In 2003 the Mufti suggested creating a group of editors who would be responsible for preparing religious programs for mass media. Two Muslims were appointed chief executives of the group. Religious leaders feel that these programs and newspaper articles have been well received by popular audiences and that there will likely to be a continuing demand for such programs.

Basic sociological research on these issues was published as "The State and Perspectives of Islam in Adygea" in 2004. This work was conducted in the Adygea Republic and indicated that local Islamic clergy and religious institutions have not been very systematic in educating new believers. This neglect has resulted in the emergence of new Muslim leaders who are "highly educated" but outside the traditional establishment. Therefore, they are able to enlist support for an interpretation of Islam that encourages extremist ideas among the Muslim faithful who have not enjoyed the benefits of systematic spiritual education in the traditional tenets of Islam.

In an effort to address problems associated with Islamic beliefs and rituals, the Spiritual Department undertook a review of what they regarded as obsolete dogmas and rituals in 2004. Shortcomings in religious education, according to the Spiritual Department, had produced contradictions and "false teachings" which were encouraged by the followers of revisionist Islamic movements throughout the North Caucasus. Practices associated with the "Muslim funeral procession" were among the most frequently reported "false teachings". Several Muslim scholars were charged with making a full revision of Muslim funeral practice and presenting those revisions to the believers and having them distributed by Muslim societies in auls. [2]

[2] Today most auls have been transformed into modern villages or towns but in some under-developed parts of the Northern Caucasus they still exist in something close to the

Adygea's Muslim religious authorities chose the auls as bases for teaching renewed religious dogmas and rituals. The populations of the auls are rural and, in comparison with people from Maykop or Adygheisk, they are regarded as intellectually backward. Since it is thus easier to influence their perceptions and to enlist them into the cause of radical Islam, authorities felt that they deserve special attention.

Officially there are no Islamic Wahhabi groups in Adygea. All religious institutes are part of the Spiritual Department of the Adygh Republic and Krasnodar region. Yet, throughout the republic there are Islamic missionaries from abroad who disseminate ideas that are radically different from the teachings of traditional Islam. Such missionaries are not registered with the Spiritual Department and their activities are beyond the control of the traditional religious leadership.

The religious situation in Adygea has become is quite complicated. The revival of traditions after many years of Soviet religious persecution has generated a wide range of contacts with the foreign Diaspora. Official measures aimed at reviving national Adygh traditions, including Islam, created new opportunities for the Muslim faithful in Adygea. At the present time the Adygh people are encountering a new Islam. The young generation can now study Islam through advanced educational programs which often include the opportunity of studying in the leading Islamic educational institutions in the Middle East.

Many citizens of Adygea are convinced that members of the Adygh Diaspora are occasionally used by the intelligence services of Turkey and Middle Eastern nations in order to gain important strategic information and to strengthen their influence in the North Caucasus. These services, according to numerous Adygeans, exploit the post-Communist political processes of Adygea in order to advance their own geopolitical interests.

Numerous foreign Islamic extremist groups also send missionaries to Adygea and employ them in order to advance their own goals. For example, missionaries from Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Islamic organization *Nahtadul Islamia* (which translates as "Islamic revival") and the *Fethullahcilars*, who are followers of the Turkish Islamic leader Fethullah Gulen, have targeted Adygean youth. Fethullah Gulen's group has already established itself in Turkey and Central Asia. The objective of the above organizations

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traditional concept. This is true especially in Dagestan. More frequently, auls in the Northern Caucasus have nothing in common with their ancient predecessors and other than their historical names.

is to educate children and young people in the principles of Islamic dogma and to transform them into Islamic zealots who will engage in extremist activities and practice intolerance towards Christians. There has been a growing perception among citizens of Adygea that the activity of such missionaries is subversive and destructive.

Opening day schools and boarding schools for teaching Islam to young people has become a common practice for Islamic fundamentalist organizations from abroad. Within this framework some residents of Adygea have been sent to study in Islamic educational institutions in Syria, Egypt, and Turkey. Islamic organizations from United Arab Emirates, the "Turkish agency for international cooperation", and *Al-Igasa-al-Islamia* (which translates as "Salvation") have provided financial support to make such study trips possible.

Thus the process of re-Islamization in the Adygh Republic has its specific features on the one hand bringing it closer to Islam revival in other 'Adygh' regions of the North Caucasus, and on the other hand demonstrating its difference. The sociological research conducted in 1999-2000 made clear the general religious trends in the Republic: according to this data there is no total Islamization of society. Only 35% of the respondents claimed to be nominal followers of Islam and only 10% indicated a strict adherence to Islamic dogma.

The research which was published as "The State and Perspectives of Islam in Adygea" showed that the Adygh people are more likely to characterize themselves in ethnic terms than by religious affiliation. Only 6% of the respondents think of Islam as being more important than the traditional Adygh culture. About 17% said they considered Islam and the traditional culture to be of equal importance. Perhaps very significantly, the researcher found that many Muslims in Adygea distrust the local clergy. Such distrust represents an important opening for the Middle East missionaries now working in the republic in an effort to enlist support for radical Islam.

According to this research traditional ideology is still dominant in Adygh society and surpasses the post-Soviet Islamic revival. It is based on what would be referred to as the 'norms and rules of the Adygh behavior' with the modifications needed for it to correspond to modern conditions. The majority of people who are non-believers in a general sense still associate themselves with religion to the extent is regarded as one of the several components the national identity. For the most part, Adygea demonstrates

an interdenominational tolerance and a constructive cooperation between the major confessions.

As one talks to residents of Adygea, it can clearly be seen that they regard situation as stable. They feel that Muslims enjoy all basic rights and are not persecuted on any sort of religious grounds. There are no serious clashes between the Islamic and Christian communities. By all indications, Adygea has been spared the trauma of such sectarian disputes. The Adygh have their autonomy, they hold most seats in the Government and the local Parliament. They have their own Constitution which serves to protect their rights. This stable religious, economic and political situation attracts more and more people from the Diaspora. They come back to their native land because they feel comfortable there. There is no significant separatist movement or calls of separation from the Russian Federation. There is a general recognition that without membership in the Russian Federation Adygea wouldn't be able to survive.

Yet, the year-long crisis over the possible merger into Krasnodar could well change this relatively tranquil situation. Such a merger would represent, in the eyes of numerous local Muslims, a counter-nationalist reaction to the events of the previous decade. In 2006, Adygea President Khasret Sovmen sparked a political crisis when he resigned in protest against the proposed merger. Intervention by Russian President Vladimir Putin persuaded Sovmen to finish his presidential term thus defusing the crisis.

Presidents Putin and Sovmen

Islamic organizations and law enforcement in Adyghea

A very important item on the Muslim Board work plan is establishing close connections between the process of Islamic revival in the region and the attitude of local state and security agencies towards this process. The Mufti underlines 'the importance of cooperation between the clergy and local state agencies'. That's why he proposed creation of a Governmental Committee on Islamic propaganda among the population of the republic. This committee would consist of experts from a number of local ministries including Internal Affairs Ministry, Ministries of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Public Health, and the prosecutor's office.

In addition, the Mufti is in regular contact with Orthodox Church leaders in the region, namely with the bishop of Maykop and Adygea Panteleimon.

The Mufti is known to undertake realistic studies about the state of Islam, especially in those auls and regions of the republic regarded as being more susceptible to radical influences.

Young Muslims have been very responsive to the Mufti because of his demonstrated respect for their secular and religious ambitions and his willingness to communicate directly with them on a regular basis. The Mufti was responsible for creation of a Spiritual Department which concentrates on the needs of the younger generation. For this reason, his efforts to maintain the purity of Islamic doctrine has enjoyed success not seen in most other regions of the North Caucasus. Moreover, by establishing contacts with other public organizations in the republic, the Mufti has prevented the institutional isolation of the Islamic organizations.

The Mufti has tried to involve the Adygh intellectuals in discussions aimed at identifying and guiding the process of Islamic proliferation in Adygea. As a tribute to his success, he has organized a number of conferences on "The role of Islam in the Republic of Adyghea and the relationship between Islam and other confessions".

Another tribute to his success can be seen in the failure of radical Turkish organizations to gain a hold in Adygea in spite of their efforts. In the 1990's the Turkish organizations *Nurcular* and *Suleymancilar* made unsuccessful attempts to establish bases in Adygea. Each of these is classified as a "tarikat", an old Arabic word generally translated as "the path". These organizations are best described as brotherhoods or secret societies much like the *Naqshibandi* which has long been active in the Caucasus. Radical Azerbaijani Muslims who tried to found Islamic schools in Adygea failed to gain any local support in 1994. In 2003 they attempted to create a private lyceum in Maykop but also failed. Other reported attempts, including one in the Aphipsip aul, have been fruitless.

The Federal Security Service (FSS) of Adyghea controls such activities and has enjoyed support from the Spiritual Department and the Mufti. For example, in connection with the numerous efforts of founding Turkish Islamic schools in 2003 the Board decided it was necessary that any one who wants to create such school should have special permission for such activity both from the Spiritual Department and from the FSS.

During the 1990s different international organizations aspired to expand their influence and activities on the territory. Among the most successful of them we may name the branch of the World Association *Islamic Call*. Since 1999 it has hosted numerous charitable events during Muslim feasts. Since

2003 the Adygh branch of the Association has participated in Russian conferences on anti-terrorism.

In recent years state and security agencies of Adygea have limited and in some cases even prevented the activities of international Islamic organizations seeking to establish bases on the territory of the republic. Organizations subject to these measures have been Turkish groups and branches of the *Islamic Call* organization. The fact that there was no governmental support and, in many cases, local opposition forced such groups to rely entirely on international sponsorship.

Close cooperation between security agencies and religious organizations made it possible to create and maintain what most people regard as a 'healthy' atmosphere where Islam and Orthodox Christianity can work without adopting any of the more radical religious tendencies as have been seen recently in Kabardino-Balkaria. Thus, neither the mass media nor average citizens are likely to discuss Wahhabi movements. Anti-Islamic propaganda is rarely employed because people generally do not feel threatened by radical Islamic movements.

Nevertheless, there are some elements of political censorship. The security forces of the republic, namely FSS and the Regional Antiterrorist Committee of the Adygh Republic, control all publications concerning Islam and routinely monitor the press in search for articles which, in their opinion, might 'stimulate national hatred'. The primary objectives of the FSS and the Regional Antiterrorist Committee actions are to prevent any international radical organizations, especially Turkish ones, from penetrating the republic.

According to officials in local security organizations, the "Turkish Republic constantly tries to establish its influence in the North Caucasus by destabilizing the political, social and economic situation in the region and stimulating extremist processes in the South of Russia." They also point out that Turkish Muslims use 'Muslim rhetoric' to give 'ideological substantiation' to their separatist purposes. Moreover, the officials emphasize that "we can't deny that the earlier forms of social structure of the peoples of the North Caucasus in ideological and propagandist rhetoric of the nationalists will be associated with the traditional forms of Islam collectivism". [3] The Nalchik violence of October, 2005, fueled police concerns about the possibility of Islamic fundamentalism in Adygea and resulted in the arrests of several Muslims, including the imam Ruslan

[3] These insights were offered in a private conversation in Maykop.

Khakirov, a member of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Adygea and Krasnodar Territory.

Generally, the FSS and the Regional Antiterrorist Committee don't interfere with religious life in the republic. There are no cases of discrimination against the Muslim population or any reported instances of religious persecution affecting the performance of Islamic rituals. While it is true that many Islamic schools have been closed down those closures were not the results of any official ban. Rather, the most common reason has been their unpopularity among the atheist population. Militia officers have raided mosques only in urgent cases, such as when they have received information about the storage of contraband items in those mosques.

In conclusion, the most prominent assumption is that the socio-political situation in the republic is not being aggravated by the processes of Islam revival in the North Caucasus in general and in Adyghea in particular. Islam in Adygea is tolerant towards dissidents and nonconformists within the Islamic community and keeps up good relations with the local government and security forces. On balance, the situation in the republic is peaceful, calm and a happy contrast with other republics of North Caucasus.

Contributors

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