

**TERRORIST PRACTICES OF
ULTRA-RADICAL SALAFI
IN DAGHESTAN**
(Case Study of the Jennet and Shari'a Jamaats)

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Very soon after the events of August 1999, the Chechen warlords changed their tactics from direct clashes with the federal forces into surprise skirmishes in the rear and subversive acts. Since the RF power structures were present everywhere in the republic and controlled all, or nearly all, of Chechnia, the terrorist “resistance forces,” which should be called “militants,” “members of illegal armed groups” or “terrorists,” stepped up their activities. “Terrorism” is understood as non-institutional resistance, when the assets and forces of one of the sides do not allow it to acquire legal forms and oppose the enemy on the front.

Certain forces in the West and certain Muslim thinkers prefer to regard the Chechen separatists as rebels, the “warriors of jihad,” “resistance fighters,” etc. For example, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a mujtahid well known across the Arab East, distinguishes several types of terrorism: civilian or

social terrorism when criminal armed groups ambush travelers on the road, use arms against them, and thus sow terror in society. The Koran is very severe with respect to them: “The punishment for those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land; that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter” (Surah 5, ayat 33).¹ The second type of terrorism is colonial terrorism existing in two variants. The first is represented by French colonialism in Algeria, where the colonialists ruled the country together with the local people. The second, says Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is represented by colonialism that strives to destroy or assimilate the local population and take their lands away from them. America is the most graphic example of this, where the Conquistadors and then the English waged wars of extermination against the local Indians and drove them into reservations. The author says: “Terrorism means the use of force and violence against innocent people, against those with whom you have no problems, with the sole aim of planting fear in others. This is what terrorism means.”²

In Daghestan, secret terrorist groups began making their existence known in 2000. Acting with the terrorist “jamaats,” they looked at their enemies as representatives of “colonial terrorism” who contributed to the assimilation of the local people and destroyed their culture and traditions. This was more or less justified by what Yusuf al-Qaradawi said about this type of terrorism, de facto sanctioning this disgusting and very dangerous sociopolitical phenomenon.

In 2002, a terrorist organization called jamaat Jennet headed by Rappani Khalilov, a crony of well-known terrorist Shamil Basaev, came to the forefront with several terrorist acts. It specialized in assassinations of people employed by the law enforcement bodies—traffic and riot police, militiamen, and members of the security service and public prosecutor structures. In 2002-2005, assassinations were everyday features of life in Daghestan.

The ranks of the terrorist underground swelled with young men trained in the Salafi jamaats of the republic’s cities and villages who sided with the veterans of combat and subversive activities in illegal armed groups (IAG). Varis Varisov, investigator of the public prosecutor office of Daghestan, said in our private talk that the members of the terrorist groups (jamaats Shari’a and Jennet) are mostly people earlier convicted for robbery, stealing, and other grave crimes. Despite their criminal past, these “guerillas” are consistently exploiting Islamic slogans, and appealing to the Koran and the Prophet to justify their terrorist acts, information about which normally appears on the Internet site of the Chechen separatists [www.kavkazcenter.com].

According to the republic’s Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Shari’a jamaat is sowing terror; in this way it hopes to overcome the political system and liquidate its law enforcement structures—the militia and special services. In 2002-2005, it committed several crimes that echoed across the republic. It is fighting the existing political system to set up an Islamic Shari’a -based theocratic state.

Assassinations of officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, especially those employed by the Administration for Fighting Extremism and Criminal Terrorism, began in September 2002 when the Administration’s head, Colonel Akhberdilav Akilov, was killed. This was not the chance murder of a high-placed official; it was the beginning of murders of officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who had allegedly taken part in persecuting and repressing the Wahhabis. It was the militants of the Shari’a jamaat headed by Rasul Makasharipov (guide and personal Avar translator of Shamil Basaev in August 1999 when armed bands had invaded Daghestan from Chechnia) and the Jennet jamaat headed by Rappani Khalilov who carried out the terrorist acts.

¹ “Terror i nasilie,” *Novoe delo*, No. 50, 12 December, 2002.

² *Ibidem*.

In 2003, the list of their crimes became longer: in August they murdered Major Tagir Abdullaev of the same Administration, while another officer, Salikh Shamkhalov, and his wife were shot to death in their car. On 6 September, there was a fire exchange on the slopes of Tarki-Tau at Makhachkala that cost four militiamen their lives. During the follow-up operations in the forest, investigators discovered a militant camp, a so-called hut, that showed signs of long being lived in. The Ministry of Internal Affairs was sure that the murders of the militiamen were planned there. In October, Zaur Bekbolatov, who worked for the Administration, and four more militiamen were murdered; in November, Administration Head Magomed Magomedov survived an attempt on his life: the mine planted at the side of the road did not detonate.

What can be said about the terrorist jamaats' social composition? At first they were staffed with people who knew next to nothing about Islamic subtleties and who had tasted pressure from the law enforcement bodies. In the latter half of 2005, however, members of the Muslim intelligentsia joined the terrorist underground. Iasin (Makhach) Rasulov, for example, started his career as a journalist, essay writer, and translator; he was a post-graduate student at the theology department of Daghestani State University, and member of the presidium of the RF Union of Muslim Journalists. After failing to fit into the new system of social and public relations, he turned to armed struggle and subversive acts to the great amazement of all who knew him. In any case, the media wrote about him as an active member of the Shari'a jamaat.³

There is no doubt that he acted under the immense influence of the Salafi ultra-radical ideas, which treat jihad as the beginning and end of the struggle against the "Qufri system" and its abettors as hypocrites (*munafiqs*). On 24 October, 2005 Iasin Rasulov and his cronies, Murad Lakhiiyalov and Gajimagomed Ismailov, were discovered in one of the apartments on Nasrutdinov Prospect in Makhachkala. The fight went on for nine hours; two of the riot police were wounded, but the local militia and special forces managed to kill the terrorists in a powerful onslaught. It should be said that Gajimagomed Ismailov was amir of the Shari'a jamaat; and Murad Lakhiiyalov was his "right-hand man," who filled the post after Rasul Makasharipov was exterminated on 6 July, 2005 in a house on M. Gajiev Street in Makhachkala. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they were among those who started a fire at the prosecutor's office of the Lenin District of Makhachkala; they were responsible for the murder of prominent Daghestanian political scientist Magomedzagid Varisov and Minister Zagir Arukhov, as well as for the blasts that destroyed militia cars. Murad Lakhiiyalov personally was posthumously accused of murdering Zagir Arukhov.

On 9 October, 2005, there was a fighting between jamaat Shari'a militants and Daghestani militia on Pervomaiskaia Street in Makhachkala. After several hours of fierce fighting, two servicemen of a special unit were killed, and two others were wounded. Finally, the terrorists were showered with grenades when an armored personnel carrier was brought to the house and large-caliber machineguns were used. Four of the terrorists were killed. One of them, Abuzagir Mantaev, defended his thesis in 2002 and received a Ph.D. (Political Science). His subject was "Wahhabism and the Political Situation in Daghestan." For some time, he worked in the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the European Part of Russia, under Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin, after which he moved to Makhachkala, where he joined the jamaat Shari'a in mid- 2005.

The fact that the Muslim intelligentsia, young men with higher education and academic degrees, takes part in terrorist activities says that Daghestanian society is in a crisis. A certain part of the local youth refers to itself as *Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa* (members of the Sunna and the community), that is, the Salafis, independent Muslims wishing to contribute to Islamization and to develop the "religion of Allah." For this reason, they are squeezed out of their social niches: they have either to leave the region, or to abandon politically active Islam, or become radicals and potential members of subversive

³ [www.kavkaz-memo.ru], 12 September, 2005.

and terrorist groups. In this way, they are opposed to the state and accuse the state structures and the official clergy of their misfortunes.

The Sufi tariqats (the so-called traditionalists) also have real and potential “warriors of Islam” among their members. According to the fighters themselves (Dokku Umarov⁴ in particular), tariqatists fight together with the Chechen “rebels,” they spread the same ideology, and the same sacral history and theory of Islam as the Wahhabis. It should be said that Salafism is not the only doctrine that could turn extremist when pursuing its religious and political aims, therefore we should prevent Islam from becoming a teaching of extreme intolerance, xenophobia, and aggression. At the very least, we should stem the process. Religious-political extremism as a step toward subversion and terrorism is not limited to its socioeconomic component—poverty and unemployment—even though they are responsible for the radicalization of large numbers of young men.

It is not enough to explain the flare-ups of terrorist activities by increased funding from domestic and foreign sources. This is what some of the federal military commanders prefer to think—they reduce everything to money in an effort to prove that lack of ideas will finally destroy the “resistance movement.” In so doing, they are pursuing several aims: first, they want to undermine the trust the militants enjoy among the young and their popularity—indeed, people who kill each other while sharing the spoils are moral perverts. Second, lavish donations from abroad explain and justify the failure to defeat the subversive and terrorist underground; money is responsible for the shoots of extremism and reproduction of the “resistance movement,” not only in Chechnia, but also in Daghestan. In other words, those of the Center’s representatives who concentrate on the economic factors keep ignoring (or rejecting) the other causes behind religious-political extremism. After 1999, force was used against the Salafi trend, while the real nature of each of the Salafi groups, either moderate or extremist, is absolutely ignored.

This happens across the entire Northern Caucasus: mosques are closed in Kabardino-Balkaria, while in Ingushetia, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and Daghestan not only real and potential Salafis, but also praying people are often mercilessly persecuted. Finally, the military regime in Chechnia, in which the civilians have to live, as well as the special, so-called mopping-up, operations supply members of the public and certain clerics with a chance to lament the pressure to which Islam developing outside the state’s control is subjected. This is what imam of the Idris-haji Echeda mosque on Malygin Street in Makhachkala thinks.⁵ It was his home that militiamen, who had been informed (or, rather, misinformed by the imam’s ill-wisher), searched for Murad Lakhialov, a militant of the Shari’a jamaat, on 19 July, 2005. The mosque and the house were encircled by special units, while the adjacent streets were blocked off by armored personnel carriers and other military vehicles. After clarifying the circumstances, the officers left the mosque. It should be said that it is normal to find leaflets of all sorts, including those issued by jamaat Shari’a, in mosques frequented by real or former Salafi fighters, who look no different from the rest of the praying crowd. This was probably what brought the militia to the mosque on Malygin Street. This happens in the mosque on Kotrov Street, which was built using the money of the Khachilaev brothers—it is believed to be a Wahhabi mosque. No wonder the lists of Wahhabis grow longer. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Daghestan, recently “it detained 55 people, and 19 militants were killed during special operations. These people were suspected of being members of illegal armed groups or their accomplices.”⁶

Along with other factors, religious-political extremism grows more active because of the ill-planned policies of the Center and the republican authorities. After 1999, “veterans of the Chechen

⁴ [www.kavkazcenter.com].

⁵ See: *Chernovik*, 29 July, 2005.

⁶ [www.riadagestan.ru].

war and former jamaat members” appeared in Daghestan, including members of the so-called Islamic Jamaat of Daghestan. The authorities and the power structures deprived them of a chance to integrate into the social system and find a place in the social and economic sphere. The fate of amir of the Shari’a jamaat Rasul (Muslim) Makasharipov is a typical example. Liberated under an amnesty, he (according to my sources) was frequently blamed for crimes he did not commit. As a former Khattab interpreter (in August-September 1999), he was repeatedly called to the district militia station, where he was beaten up and subjected to degrading treatment. After one of such “visit,” he turned to the militants, set up the Shari’a jamaat, and became its leader. There is another version of the same story, which, nevertheless, ended the same way. His former cronies suspected the “Khattab interpreter,” who had been released from the prison too soon and too easily, of conspiracy with the special services.⁷ To prove his loyalty to the cause of jihad and to remove himself from suspicion, he assumed leadership of the group that hunted militiamen who too actively persecuted the Salafis.

There is more than one factor that makes Islamic groups active fighters. A young man’s Islamic identity should be taken into account, along with his economic and social status, his expressivity, moral and psychological makeup, attitude toward aggression, external pressure, etc. It was his expressivity and unbending nature aggravated by certain other reasons that brought Gazimaged Ramazanov to the Shari’a band, where he was known as Mansur Tsudakharskiy. Under this name, on 28 July, 2005 he was killed during a special operation in Askerkhanov’s house on Mir Street in Makhachkala.

The use of force and administrative pressure—the authorities’ two preferred instruments—are factors which push young Muslims (irrespective of the Islamic trends they belong to) to the margins, where they join terrorist and subversive organizations. In 2000-2005, it was not Chechnia that lured the former fighter (this remained in the past, in 1995-1999). After setting up local bands, many preferred to stay in Daghestan. In 2004 and 2005, explosions, acts of subversion, and attempted murders (buckets of ammonium nitrate were often used) became especially frequent. Militia vehicles and cars carrying militia and riot police officers became the victims of “bucket terrorism.” On 15 April, 2005, the prosecutor’s office of the Lenin District of Makhachkala was destroyed by a blast; a month later, on 20 May, a blast in an apartment building entranceway killed Zagir Arukhov, minister for ethnic policies, information, and foreign relations, and his bodyguard. On 28 June, Magomedzagid Varisov, director of the Center for Strategic Research and Political Technologies, was killed; three days later, on 1 July terrorists organized a blast at a bathhouse that killed 10 servicemen of a special unit.

The Shari’a jamaat officially assumed responsibility for the murder of Magomedzagid Varisov by placing the following statement on the site of the Chechen fighters: “We executed an FSB official who spoke for the Kremlin and its Daghestanian puppets, one of the most active ideologists of the power of Russian qafirs and an active opponent of the Shari’a rule in Daghestan. As an agent of the special services, this qafir lackey carried out an active propaganda campaign against Allah and His Prophet (may peace and blessing be with him) on the pages of the local newspapers published by the puppets. He was a slave that served the occupants, the henchmen, and the butchers of his own people; he dared to insult the Islamic Jamaat Shari’a, the Legal Power in Daghestan. When we liquidated the puppet minister Zagir Arukhov, who was also a colonel of the intelligence service of the Russian Federation, Varisov wrote in one of his foul articles that we do not exist and that our statements ‘are ad hoc statements from all sorts of virtual jamaats.’”⁸

The jamaat ideologists did their best to blacken the images of Daghestanian scholar Varisov and Minister Arukhov, who were presented not as mere qafirs, but also as “FSB officials who spoke for

⁷ The author’s field information.

⁸ [www.kavkazcenter.com].

the Kremlin and its Daghestani puppets,” and who not only opposed the rule of the Shari‘a, but also doubted the existence of the terrorist underground. These and similar terrorist activities, accompanied by similar commentaries, were designed to stir up ideological sympathies among the local people, primarily young people. There is no doubt that certain social sections associate power with evil and present it as the worst, purely anti-popular manifestation of the corrupt political elite, which has become part of the mafia.

The Islamic circles regard a negative attitude toward the Shari‘a as a sign of utter ignorance; in certain religious circles it causes animosity. Indeed, nobody dares to oppose the Shari‘a, the law of Allah. Not infrequently, even militiamen say that they are not against the Shari‘a. In Varisov’s case, his allegedly anti-Shari‘a sentiments were exploited to justify his murder and inform the sympathizers that the terrorist acts were a just retribution for “subversive anti-Islamic” activities.

There is the opinion that these two murders destroyed an important part of the republic’s ideological and information front and that the terrorist underground was resolved to destroy its ideological opponents. This is not quite correct. Both Arukhov and Varisov were open people very easy to kill. Despite the numerous threats, the minister had only one bodyguard; Varisov had no bodyguards, despite the numerous threats he received over the phone. He was put under surveillance, yet his requests to the corresponding structures about bodyguards were ignored.

It seems that the terrorist jamaats owe their success to the “moles” in the law enforcement bodies, otherwise it is a mystery how the Shari‘a jamaat learned personal details about the Ministry of Internal Affairs officials and the radio frequencies used by the militia. The republican leaders hastened to respond to this: on 6 March, 2005, Rustam Abdullaev was detained and searched. It turned out that he had a list of 140 officials of the law enforcement bodies who were to be executed, complete with their home addresses and phone numbers.⁹ The militants issued the following statement: “The so-called Ministry of Internal Affairs of Daghestan was shocked to learn that we have a long list of its leaders and officials, complete with home and work addresses and phone numbers, who are to be executed. This is true: we have detailed information about all the heads and service officers of the so-called Ministry of Internal Affairs, Federal Security Service, and the Public Prosecutor’s Office. We shall liquidate them one after another, since they are personally responsible for the persecution and murders of the Muslims.” The jamaat acts not only as a political force, as the self-appointed “legal power of Daghestan.” It poses itself as the “protector of all persecuted Muslims.”

Andrei Novikov, deputy foreign minister of Russia dispatched to Daghestan after a series of terrorist and subversive acts carried out by the Shari‘a jamaat, informed journalists that the law enforcement structures are dividing their time between crime detection and the economic situation. He finished his statement with the banal phrase that the channels through which militants get their money should be closed.¹⁰

This is important, but not all important. This cannot resolve the problem of religious-political extremism and terrorist groups. The latter have exploited ideological, political, social, and ethical prerequisites to set up independent mobile groups which do not need lavish or sustainable funding. In a climate of rampant corruption, it is easy to establish control over private businesses through threats and blackmail. According to Shamil Basaev, large sums come from the administration heads of the Chechen Republic.¹¹

Judging by what Andrei Novikov said, the Ministry of Internal Affairs knows that the money comes from inside the republic, which makes the jamaats even more efficient: there is no need to cross borders and avoid customs inspection.

⁹ See: *Novoe delo*, No. 27, 15 July, 2005.

¹⁰ See: *Novoe delo*, No. 28, 22 July, 2005.

¹¹ [kavkazcenter.com].

Religious groups are growing more radical because of unprofessional civil servants. When talking about the causes of Salafism, Minister of Internal Affairs of Daghestan said: "None of the heads of militia stations inform me that an imam or any other man came to him to say that a Wahhabi visited his mosque and that measures should be taken."¹² In other words, the minister called on society and the religious groups of "traditional" Islam to identify the so-called Wahhabis and inform the corresponding services about them. Since neither the minister nor his colleagues mentioned the traits identifying a Wahhabi, it is for the Spiritual Administration of the republic's Muslims and the faithful to identify them themselves, but nobody knows how. This will send up social tension, will widen the gap in society, and will plant fear, suspicion, and hatred in people's minds, while mutual mistrust will cause mass depression.

S u m m a r y

After defeating Basaev and Khattab, who invaded Daghestan in 1999 from Chechnia, and liquidating the "Islamic enclave" in three Darghinian villages—Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar—the federal and republican authorities, while purposefully opposing religious and political extremism, launched a wide-scale ideological offensive on Daghestani Salafism with the use of force. Religious leaders and preachers have been invited to take part in the process.

A war was declared on extremism represented by the Wahhabis—the ideological and political opponents of the clergy. However, the people received no instructions on how to distinguish between Wahhabis and "Ihwanists" (supporters of the political strategies pursued by the Muslim Brothers), or between separatists and Islamic radicals who might act under the roofs of different groups and units. It was said more than once that Wahhabism should not be likened to extremism.

At the same time, much of what the Spiritual Administration of the republic's Muslims is doing drives Salafism away from the religious structures of Daghestan and the Northern Caucasus; Salafi groups are becoming more radical and more receptive to extremist calls and acts. This is especially true of the groups which have not yet found their way, forms, and methods. They might be tempted by extremism. If the originally peaceful Salafi structures (jamaats) find it hard to blend with society, they will become marginalized.

It should be said that in the Northeastern Caucasus, religious and religious-political extremism has become very obvious, while religious groups grow more and more radical under the influence of the military-political processes in Chechnia, as well as due to certain ill-judged steps by secular and religious leaders. This happened in the negative socioeconomic and sociopolitical (including socioethical) context, which ended in a catastrophic crisis of ethnic, religious, and cultural identity.

Driven to the extreme by the wide-scale use of force against the Salafis of Daghestan and other North Caucasian republics, militant units began guerilla warfare against the authorities after the active phase of hostilities in Chechnia had ended. This became obvious when the opposition developed from armed clashes between warlords and federal troops, as in 2000, into regular surprise subversive and terrorist attacks of short duration in rear structures.

Terrorist groups, so-called jamaats, appeared in the Northern Caucasus under the influence of Chechen militants and grew out of the local religious structures living under domestic and foreign pressure. In 2002, the Jennet group under Rappani Khalilov and jamaat Shari'a under Rasul Maksharipov entered into an active phase of their activities. Both leaders had fought in Chechnia; their jamaats specialized in the assassination of law enforcement officers: they attacked militia and riot police

¹² *Novoe delo*, No. 16, 23 April, 2004.

vehicles, militia, and FSB officers and employees of the public prosecutor's office. In 2002-2005, these attacks became an everyday feature of the republic's social and political life.

The fact that Muslim intellectuals such as Ia. Rasulov and A. Mantaev, young people with higher education and academic degrees, were involved in terrorist activities speaks of a grave crisis in Daghestani society. Some of the young men still associate themselves with Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamaa, that is, with the Salafis, independent Muslims, and are willing to take part in Islamization and the development of the "religion of Allah." Today, these people cannot find their niche either in Daghestan or in other North Caucasian republics: some of them prefer to leave the region, others have quit active social-political Islamic activities, while still others are turning radical and forming a so-called risk group, the members of which are gradually merging with subversive and terrorist structures.