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**ОПЫТ ПРОТИВОДЕЙСТВИЯ ТЕРРОРИЗМУ
В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КАРАЧАЕВО-ЧЕРКЕССИЯ:
АНАЛИЗ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫХ СМИ И МНЕНИЯ
ЭКСПЕРТОВ**

**EXPERIENCE IN COUNTERING TERRORISM
IN THE REPUBLIC OF KARACHAY-
CHERKESSIA: ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL
MEDIA AND EXPERT OPINIONS**

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Аннотация

Подробный анализ материалов, представленных в региональных СМИ, по вопросам противодействия экстремистским и террористическим угрозам на территории Карачаево-Черкессии с 2010 по 2020 гг., а также мнения экспертов, высказанные в ходе интервью, позволили определить специфику региональной системы противодействия, а также оценить, как произошедшие изменения в республике, так и современное состояние.

Ключевые слова: экстремизм, терроризм, ваххабизм, Имарат Кавказ¹, ИГ², Карачаево-Черкессия, борьба, профилактика.

Abstract

Detailed analysis of materials presented in the regional mass media on issues of countering extremist and terrorist threats on the territory of Karachay-Cherkessia in 2010–2020, as well as experts' opinions expressed during the interview that allowed to determine the specifics of the regional system of counteraction and evaluate both the changes that occurred in the Republic and its current state.

Key words: extremism, terrorism, Wahhabism, Caucasus Emirate³, IS⁴, Karachay-Cherkessia, struggle, prevention.

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¹ Организация признана экстремистской и запрещена в РФ.

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³ The organization is recognized as extremist and banned in the Russian Federation.

⁴ The organization is recognized as extremist and banned in the Russian Federation.

Terrorism is the most dangerous method of political destabilization of society. The support of terrorists by a relatively small group of radicals and insignificant organizational and technical resources is sufficient to launch terrorist campaigns. Terrorism undermines power and destroys the political system of the state. In modern society, it acts as a variant of political struggle involving the use of ideologically motivated violence.

A terrorist act demonstrates to the public the powerlessness of the authorities, creates precedents of active disobedience and forceful opposition to the existing order, activates any forces and sentiments that oppose the authorities, including those that distance themselves from terrorist tactics, affects the economy, reduces the investment appeal of the country, degrades its image and pushes the country to radicalization of the political course, to authoritarian forms of government.

The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation defines terrorism as - an ideology of violence and the practice of "influencing decision-making by state authorities, local governments or international organizations, associated with the intimidation of the population and (or) other forms of illegal violent actions. [1].

Violent incidents have enveloped the North Caucasus, with varying degrees of geographic variation and quantitative intensity, over the past thirty years. The instability of this nature was cyclical, by 2010 some of the republics had become a testing ground for active armed hostilities, and the situation has only managed to stabilize by now.

In the early 1990s, the idea of "liberating Ichkeria" played a defining role in the actions of gangs in the North Caucasus. The most resonant terrorist acts - Sh. Basayev's raids on Budyonovsk, June 14, 1995, and S. Raduyev's Kizlyar raids in January 1996, were carried out with the slogans of ending combat operations by Russian army units and internal troops in Chechnya, withdrawing the Russian army, and starting political negotiations about the future status of the republic. The period of active armed hostilities ended in 1999, but the "Nord-Ost" bombing in Moscow, 23-26 October 2002, and the Beslan school siege on 1 September 2004, showed that the separatists are still active, having only changed their ideological component. The idea of an independent nation-state based on Shariat gave way to a desire to create an Islamic state in the entire North Caucasus that could in the future become a province of the "World Islamic Caliphate.

In 2007 D. Umarov declared himself "amir" (commander-in-chief) of the Caucasus militants and leader of the Jihad. The struggle under the banner of the national movement was transformed into a confrontation under the Islamist slogans of Salafism (Wahhabism) - the struggle for the "true faith. Islam turned into a "counter-culture," and in these conditions the bandit underground was transformed into an "inter-ethnic religious sect," recruiting recruits among young people regardless of their ethnicity. In the course of ten years the largest terrorist acts were connected with the activities of this organization.

Moderate tactics of gang members against "infidels" gave way to radical methods. In April 2009 the leader of the Caucasus Emirate issued a slogan essentially endorsing terrorist acts which resulted in the deaths of civilians who had no direct connection with the fighting against the muja-hedin. The idea of total Jihad, holy war and death in the way of Allah, became widespread everywhere.

In 2013-2014. IS⁵ disseminated a call to commit hijra (relocation of Muslims to the Middle East to carry out armed jihad) in Russia, which found many supporters. By June 2015, most of the North Caucasus underground groups had sworn allegiance to the Islamic State, later obtaining the status of its new "province" - "Wilayat Caucasus" and in October 2016 there was not a single group in the North Caucasus that affiliated itself with the "Caucasus Emirate". The North Caucasus terrorist site continued to exist as one of the many regions in the Russian Federation where IS has spread its influence.

Social and political tensions in the North Caucasus republics are a complex consequence of economic, ethno-political, ethno-cultural and confessional factors. Despite the systemic similarity

⁵ The organization is recognized as extremist and banned in the Russian Federation.

of the main socio-economic, ethno-political and confessional problems in the republics of the North Caucasus, the dynamics, scale and forms of manifestation of conflict in them differ significantly.

In 2010-2011 there was a growth of criminal and terrorist activity on the territory of Karachay-Cherkessia, there were active gangs with the number of active members of about 20 people⁶, but in 2012 the situation managed to stabilize. Armed incidents have not become a trend for Karachay-Cherkessia, said Timur Zhuzhuev, head of the administration of the Khabezsky District of Karachay-Cherkessia: "...the republic has been a peaceful region in terms of the terrorist threat for over 10 years" [2]. The analysis of these tendencies as well as revealing of regional peculiarities of work in the sphere of counteraction to extremist and terrorist threats in the republic was the subject of the expedition to Cherkessk conducted from August 7 to 14, 2021 on the basis of research of republican mass media as well as interviews of experts.

For the analysis of regional socio-political editions of the Chechen Republic the following selection criteria were chosen: type of editions (pro-government or independent); availability of archive from 2010 to 2020; Den' of the Republic; Vestnik Karachaevo-Cherkessiya; Cherkessk: yesterday, today, tomorrow. In the above-mentioned publications materials where the terms "extremism" and "terrorism" were used were selected manually.

In international practice, there is no generally accepted concept of "extremism" (from Latin "extreme"); its interpretation depends on social and political conditions and is defined concretely in accordance with them. In Russia, the concept of "extremism" is stipulated by law and includes a certain set of actions [3].

In international practice, the definition of "violent extremism" (violent extremism) is increasingly used, which is an extreme form of extremism that uses terrorism as a way to achieve goals.

Two definitions of terrorism are widespread in the Russian Federation: legal and political. According to the Federal Law of the Russian Federation "On Combating Terrorism", "terrorism is an ideology of violence and the practice of influencing decision-making by state authorities, local governments or international organizations, associated with the intimidation of the population and (or) other forms of illegal violent actions". [4]. Political science definition indicates that "terrorism is one of the tactics of political struggle associated with the use of ideologically motivated violence. Its essence is violence with the purpose of intimidation. The subject of violence are individuals or non-governmental organizations, and the object is the power in the face of individual civil servants or society in the face of individual citizens, infrastructure, life support system" [5]. [5].

An analysis of the dynamics and nature of publications related to the selected topics was carried out, the brief results of which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of publications on extremism and terrorism.

Name of publication	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
«Den' respubliki»	34	44	62	53	44	58	71	48	45	34	27	520
«Vestnik Karachaevo-Cherkessii»	0	1	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	7
«Cherkessk: vchera, segodnya, zavtra»	33	31	21	20	12	11	12	13	17	24	12	206

⁶ Hereinafter, unless otherwise stated, the sources of quantitative data on the North Caucasus are the data from the Spatial-Temporal Data Bank on Actions of a Terrorist Nature in the South of Russia (program for recording terrorist actions) for the computer № 2012612626, dated March 13, 2012, created under the guidance of G. G. Matishov at the Southern Scientific Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The total number of publications covering both manifestations of crimes of terrorist and extremist nature and devoted to anti-terrorist activities is 733.

The information is divided into several categories:

- 1. bulletins - coverage of terrorist acts, special operations, search operations, command and staff training;*
- 2. releases of meetings, conferences, meetings, etc. at federal, regional and local levels - the Security Council, the ATK, the Coordinating Council, the Prosecutor's Office, the Muslim Coordinating Council, etc;*
- 3. coverage of court sessions;*
- 4. materials on conferences, forums, roundtables, competitions, flash mobs, etc. devoted to the problems of countering terrorist threats;*
- 5. publications of analytical nature.*

The bulk of publications are releases of meetings, sessions, etc., as well as coverage of conferences and forums; the share of analytical materials is negligible. In independent publications materials covering terrorist and extremist crimes as well as materials devoted to antiterrorist activities do not occupy any significant space, and the presentation of information does not differ in principle from that in official national publications.

For example, the **«Vestnik Karachaevo-Cherkesii»**⁷ (issued since 2006) published only 7 articles over the decade analyzed, among which the interviews with the officials are the main bulk: the president of the republic, deputy of the National Assembly of the KChR, the head of administration of Abaza municipal district as well as the interview with Y. B. Evkurov, the former leader of Ingushetia Republic at that time.

The main accents in these reports are focused on describing the state of anti-terrorist protection of strategically important infrastructure.

The only analysis of terrorism as a social phenomenon is found in a 2011 article, "The Ancient Battle Isn't Over.

The rather modest volume of publications is most likely due to the format of the publication, as a large volume of materials on cultural and educational projects aimed at promoting inter-ethnic and inter-religious consent are presented.

«Cherkessk: vchera, segodnya, zavtra»⁸ (published since 1998) offers a more diverse palette of information and analytical materials on the problems under study. The largest number of articles was published in 2010-2011, and thereafter about 15-20 articles are published annually.

A large number of materials refer to the coverage of meetings, meetings, etc. at the federal, regional and local levels - the Security Council, the ATK, the Coordinating Council, the Prosecutor's Office, the Muslim Coordinating Council, etc.; as well as interviews with representatives of various levels of government (50-60%).

There is constant information about the trials that took place - the analysis of the crime and the terms of punishment (members of gangs, accomplices of terrorist activity, participants in the armed rebellion in Dagestan in 1999, recruiters, departure and participation in the armed struggle in Syria, posting illegal content in social networks).

It is worth paying attention to the fact that operational information mostly concerns counter-terrorist activities, such as special operations, seizures of weapons and ammunition, prohibited literature, and information about command-and-staff exercises (10%). There is some material about the burning of churches in the republic in 2010, while the rest of the material, describing terrorist attacks, refers to events in other regions of the North Caucasus Federal District (Dagestan, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Stavropol Krai) or in Russian cities in general (Moscow, St. Petersburg).

⁷«Vestnik Karachaevo-Cherkesii» – information-analytical and cultural-educational newspaper of the Karachaevo-Cherkess Republic / founder: Nartokov Sultan

⁸ «Cherkessk: vchera, segodnya, zavtra»: independent socio-political newspaper of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic / chief editor Lyudmila Mamkhyagova.

Coverage of conferences, seminars, scientific-educational and cultural projects aimed at maintaining interethnic and inter-religious harmony, as well as the development of youth initiatives takes place annually. Among the main events that received comments are the "Caucasus Forum", "Caucasian Games", the public dialogue "Peace to Caucasus", "Mashuk" (the largest project), the forum of the peoples of southern Russia.

Every year, on September 3, the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism is celebrated in Russia. It was established by the federal law "About amendments to the federal law 'About the days of military glory (victory days) of Russia' of July 21, 2005". [6]. This day commemorates the tragic events of September 1-3, 2004 in the city of Beslan (North Ossetia), when more than 300 people died as a result of a terrorist attack. Every year commemorative events of different nature take place both throughout the Russian Federation and in Karachay-Cherkessia in particular, information about this can also be found in the analyzed publication, starting in 2013.

A small percentage (5%) are analytical materials, among the main topics - the features of "telephone terrorism" (2010), the activities of the "Caucasus Emirate" in the North Caucasus (2011), "Jihad by hire" (2011), the Syrian conflict (2012), recruitment (2012), "Civil society in the North Caucasus" (2014), etc.

The structural and ideological changes of the terrorist underground, as well as the evolution of counter-terrorist activities that took place over a decade, are reflected in publications of different content.

"Den Respubliki" ⁹ (published since 04.07.1918) is a regional universal publication; its main functions are review, informational, analytical, and advertising. The main subject of coverage is local events, as well as incidents on the level of the district (NCFD), the republic, and the country as a whole; the audience includes the people of the republic. This newspaper is the leader in the production of information product, both in terms of the number of publications (more than twice as many as the independent publications analyzed), and in terms of the diversity of the topics presented (along with the categories highlighted, official documents on the programs implemented in the republic, including those of counter-terrorism orientation, are presented).

The dynamics of the number of publications, which are the object of analysis, is not periodic, but has a situational orientation, two years 2012 and 2016 stand out, which may be associated with structural changes in the state (separation of the North Caucasus Federal District - formed by a decree of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on January 19, 2010, by separating part of the subjects from the Southern Federal District), as well as with amendments in the legislation (Federal Law of 03.05.2011 N 96-FZ "On Amendments to the Federal Law of 6 March 2006 N 35-FZ "On Countering Terrorism", Presidential Decree of 14 June 2012 N 851 "On the order of establishing levels of terrorist danger, providing additional measures to ensure the security of individuals, society and state", Federal Law of 6 July 2016 No. 374-FZ "On Amendments to the Federal Law "On Combating Terrorism" and Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation in Terms of Establishing Additional Counter-Terrorism and Public Safety Measures", Federal Law No. 375-FZ "On Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation in Terms of Establishing Additional Counter-Terrorism and Public Safety Measures" of 6 July 2016).

As in independent publications, the largest number of publications is devoted to the analysis of meetings, sessions, events at the federal, regional, and local levels. On the basis of materials of this nature we can talk about the specifics of the activities of various commissions, working groups, councils, etc. (Commission under the President of Karachay-Cherkessia for harmonization of interethnic relations, prevention of extremism and destabilization of the situation in the republic, Coordination meeting on combating extremism, Antiterrorist commission of KChR, board of the republican Ministry of ethnic affairs, mass communications and press, Interdepartmental work-

⁹ "Den Respubliki" – Karachay-Cherkessia's socio-political newspaper / Founders of the print edition - People's Assembly (Parliament) of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic, Government of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic.

ing group for counteraction to terrorism and extremism ideology in KChR, Expert council for evaluation of quality of counter-propaganda materials.....).

Operational information concerns not only special operations, search operations and staff training but also issues of security of citizens during festive events, election campaigns (information about responsible persons and emergency telephone numbers is presented). There is also information on the facts of confession, voluntary surrender of weapons and ammunition, detection of caches and stashes.

A significant number of materials are devoted to the issues of interethnic and inter-religious harmony in the territory of the Republic - the status, problems, main activities and expected results. The main format of such activities are conferences, round tables, republican actions ("Together for the peace without terrorism"), and flash mobs.

It should be noted that only this edition contains the material on realized target programs (official documents) as well as detailed releases on the events within the framework of the projects like "Terrorism and extremism prevention in Karachay-Cherkessia Republic for 2011-2015", "Patriotic education of graduates of Karachaevo-Cherkessia republic for 2011-2015", "Five years of Caucasus republics. There are detailed releases on the implementation of such projects as "Terrorism and extremism prevention", "Patriotic education of citizens in 2012-2015", "Safety of educational institutions in 2013-2015", "Realization of state ethnic, confessional and information policy in Karachay-Cherkessia Republic in 2014-2019" and etc. There are announcements of events, as well as TV programs ("Caucasian Stories" on "Zvezda" channel, "Antology of Terror"- "Russia 24").

There is also information about the establishment of a commission under the head of Karachay-Cherkessia, R. B. Temrezov, to assist persons who decided to stop terrorist and extremist activity in Karachay-Cherkessia in 2012 in adapting to peaceful life, although no coverage of its activity is given.

One of the regular columns of the newspaper is information about the work of the Center for Counteraction to Extremism under the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Karachay-Cherkessia (regular meetings with schoolchildren and students, lectures, meetings and round table discussions).

Among the annual activities worth mentioning are the memorial meetings about the tragedy in Beslan (2004), held on September 3, the Day of Solidarity in the Fight against Terrorism in various parts of the Republic – Kosta Khetagurova village (monument "Children of Beslan"), Adyge-Khabl city, Adyge-Kharlov town, Akademgorodok village, and Vologda city. Adyge-Khabl, the city of Cherkessk.

Materials of analytical nature occupy a rather modest place - 5-7% of the total volume of publications ("Internet – incubator for extremism", "Middle East extremism for export", "Counteraction at a new level"...), as editor-in-chief E.V. Kratov noted "this is one good publication a year". [7], which is due to a whole range of reasons, the main one being the lack of demand from society.

On the basis of the analysis of the publications presented in three regional publications the following conclusions can be made:

- since not a single landmark terrorist act was committed on the territory of the republic during the period under study, the overall situation is described in the terms "situation stable, but with the possibility of aggravation", "maintaining a stable situation", "recipe for interethnic harmony of the republic", "Karachay-Cherkessia – territory of peace and consent";

- among the analyzed periodicals, the most complete picture of the situation in the Republic in the sphere of counter-terrorism and extremism can be drawn based on the official republican newspaper "Den Respubliki" which tries to show the solution of existing problems through cooperation of the state (region, republic) with public and religious associations, international and other organizations;

- the existing independent publications do not put countering terrorist threats in the list of the most pressing problems, so the number of publications is small;
- Regional periodicals are not analytical in nature, so information of this nature is only sporadic.

The situation in the republic is characterized as stable, albeit with signs of anxiety in the attitudes of the local population, also by all the experts interviewed during the expedition, including representatives of the KChR Ministry for Nationalities, Mass Communications and the Press; law enforcement agencies; republican mass media; and institutions of higher education.

Thus, Yevgeny Vladimirovich Kratov¹⁰ noted in his interview that "at present the situation is stable – all active representatives of gangs have been eliminated. Extremism and terrorism are marginal phenomena like a virus which manifests itself only when the organism (state) is weakened. In 2010, the republic witnessed a surge in extremism, and it was during this period that it entered the political agenda" [8]. On November 1, 2010 in Karachay-Cherkessia mass arson of Christian churches and temples were committed with the aim to destabilize the socio-political situation. Two churches in Karachaevsk city were set on fire, and seven kilometers away from Karachaevsk in Ossetian settlement Ordzhonikidzevsky an Orthodox church was completely burned. The incident was aimed at inciting interethnic and inter-confessional discord and caused a wide public response. Spiritual, political and public leaders of Karachay-Cherkessia condemned the vandalism of Christian churches in the republic. The reconstruction work began almost immediately, so "the diocese, the employees of the administration of the president and the government of the KChR, who gave their day's earnings to the fund for the construction and restoration of the churches. Various republican organizations, such as the Investigative Committee of the KChR, the Department of Bailiffs of the KChR, and also the believers of the republic, have also donated to the temple restoration fund. [9].

The republic has managed to maintain stability, and this was facilitated by the fact that "strict measures have been taken to form a positive public opinion, interaction between representatives of regional authorities and spiritual organizations (R.B. Temrezov, I.A. Berdiev, Archbishop Feofilakt), clear statements were made about the ownership of churches (Feofilakt: "the church has no claim to property, the task of the church is to use churches as intended"), and restoration work has been shown. In the public consciousness, the correct image of the solution to the problem was constructed: there are "villains" who want to quarrel with the peoples of the KChR and there is a correct reaction by members of the public, this allowed to neutralize all negative tendencies" [10].

One of the experts pointed out that stability is the merit of the effective work of the representatives of law enforcement agencies who have been implementing a set of measures to counter terrorism and extremism in the republic, among which monitoring of social networks aimed at identifying and blocking illegal content; investigative measures to identify and detain adherents of radical ideology, discovering caches of weapons and ammunition as well as extremist literature are of paramount importance.

Elena Anatolievna Shcherbina¹¹, agrees with him and specifies that "the improvement of the situation in the republic is the merit of the federal center, which has made ensuring the national security of the region its top priority, the role of regional authorities in this process is not so noticeable. [11].

Even I.V. Starodubrovskaya speaks of stability, the factors of which are "a calm attitude towards other people, as well as "urbanization and the implementation of land reform" [12].

¹⁰ Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper "Den Respubliki" starting in 1998, he worked in the Office of the Government of the KChR and the Administration of the Head and Government of the KChR and was responsible for interaction with religious organizations; since 2012 he has served as Minister of Nationalities, Mass Communications and Press of the KChR republican government; since 2016 he has served as Editor-in-Chief.

¹¹ Candidate of Political Science, Associate Professor, Leading Researcher, Department of Social and Political Studies, Karachay-Cherkessia Institute for Humanitarian Research, Cherkessk.

Although **Muhammad-hadji Batchaev**¹² noted that "calm and stability in the republic has been achieved by the force of the special services. But extremist thoughts continue to be transmitted to society through the Internet space. And now the republic is going through a difficult period, with extremist thoughts among many of the local population, but people need to turn to the correct religious basics. The situation in the republic is difficult also because the representatives of radical views will now try to get into power, there are no violent incidents recorded, it is not relevant to go to the "forest", but it is only an apparent calm [13].

Each of the experts sees the origins of these processes in his own way. Some of them associate the evolution of terrorism as a social and political phenomenon that has a long history both in the world and in the North Caucasus: the development of terrorism in the North Caucasus has passed through several stages – the penetration of Wahhabism ideas and the 1st Chechen campaign, which gave a rich ground for the spread of extremist ideas; the 2nd Chechen campaign; guerilla war - murder (including of religious leaders). Wahhabism is an anti-Muslim project that is now outdated. The Prince of Saudi Arabia said that Wahhabism has ceased to exist and we will not support it [14]. In our country these ideas were very popular in the late 90s, when religious figures preaching radical views came to the republic and their ideas spread widely due to the general religious uneducation" [15].

Others, however, emphasize the ethnic component: "in the 90's it was scary when micro, mono-societies were formed, the state coped with this process, nowadays the conflicts of inter-ethnic agenda are removed, they have passed into intra-ethnic plane". [16].

It is also noted that "one of the reasons may be the not always effective activities of law enforcement agencies, as a result of which the representatives of non-traditional Islam (from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan) penetrated into the region and spread their ideas (imams and efendi often gave up their places to them)" [17].

The following measures, which allowed stabilizing the situation in the republic, are worth mentioning:

- Emphasis in the work of executive authorities, law enforcement agencies, religious and public organizations was placed on prevention of extremism, in the form of a whole complex of measures: thematic video clips aimed at combating manifestations of extremism and terrorism were shown on regional television; materials aimed at prevention of extremism and terrorism were published in mass media and Internet; representatives of clergy regularly appeared on local television and radio; state television and radio broadcasting

- since 2010 many projects aimed at strengthening interethnic and inter-religious unity have been implemented on the territory of the republic – Mashuk youth forum, Moscow school of political research by E. Nemirovskaya, regional inter-confessional camps, unfortunately many of the projects are no longer active, although others are actively working in a transformed form;

- Important work was done in places of detention, which prevented the emergence of a significant number of neophytes (new adherents of radical ideology) – "remand prisons ensured that the needs of believers were met: prisoners were interviewed by the religious figures they chose themselves, they did not prevent the performance of necessary religious rituals" [18].

The experts noted that "Karachay-Cherkessia has always been distinguished by calm, well-established principles of tolerance in society. Local residents have actively opposed terrorist threats and have always strongly condemned the perpetrators of terrorist acts. There have been cases of religious terrorism in the republic, but over the past 10 years I do not remember any. It is legitimate to say that people from the republic have taken part in terrorist acts in other regions, but I would not call them religious fanatics or ideological anti-statists, but rather people drawn into the religious community" [19].

¹² Rector of the Karachay-Cherkessia Islamic Institute, in 1992, after graduating from school, went to Syria as part of an educational program; in 1998, he graduated from Abu-Nur University; after returning home, he was appointed imam of the village Kumysh; in 1999, he was elected rais-imam of Karachayevsky district; in 2010 he continued his studies in Turkey and in 2013 he defended his thesis at the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University.

At the same time, the experts' assessment of the situation in the republic today is alarming.

With the appearance of the transnational terrorist organization IS, which regarded the North Caucasus primarily as a source of "live force," and the recruitment of new members took place via social networks, the facts of young people leaving for Syria to take part in the armed struggle on the side of IS began to emerge in the republic. The number of those who left is small, about 100 people¹³, and the "facts of the return" received a public resonance. But there is no complete picture of how the work with these people is organized". [20].

At present, a certain number of cells (including the international religious extremist organization "Al-Takfir Wal-Hijra" and the "Right Sector"), the representatives of which adhere to various radical views (up to 30 people) are recorded. The cells are quite small and of a different nature, and the work to identify them has become much more difficult than when there was a common coordinating center, which in different periods were either the Caucasus Emirate or IS.

In the republic there is a growth of adherents of non-traditional Islam, especially among young people. "In the region Islam has always been associated with tradition, traditional cultural and ethnic norms prevailed (adats) over religious ones (there was no Shariah). This has changed with the spread of IS ideological postulates in the online space, social networks proved to be a very powerful tool to influence young people in the republic. Religiosity is becoming a tribute to fashion. The number of citizens dressed in niqabs and men's religious clothes is growing, in the villages there are already mosques of both traditional and non-traditional Islam, or in traditional mosques young imams preach non-traditional ceremonial things. Also, representatives of non-traditional Islam are gradually taking over small businesses in the region". [21]. "So far it is perceived normally in society, but there is no tolerance in religion, and the problem is that in this new environment the social principles are perceived the same for the citizens of our entire state". [22].

In order to eradicate the existing negative tendencies there is a public-state partnership secured by cooperation agreements between territorial executive authorities, public and religious organizations (agreements with the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the KChR and the Pyatigorsk and Cherkesskaya diocese were signed by the Interior Ministry of the KChR, Ministry of Education and Science of the KChR, Ministry of Health of the KChR, Ministry of Labor and Social Development of the KChR, Ministry of Culture of the KChR, Main Department of the KChR, Department of the Federal Security Service of the KChR, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the KChR).

The Republic implements the subprogram "Prevention of extremism and terrorism in the KChR" within the framework of the state program "Implementation of the state ethnic, confessional, information policy in the Karachay-Cherkessia Republic" for 2019-2023, information about all activities can be found on the website of the Ministry of the KChR for Nationalities, Mass Communications and Press. An analysis of the website showed that information mostly appears in the news feed; in 2021 alone, more than 12 events of various character and orientation were held, such as round tables, work of "Druzhnyi Kavkaz" interreligious club, "Intercultural Dialogue" youth forum, "Dialogue of Cultures" ethno-cultural camp, "We-Russia" cultural and educational project, "Future of the Caucasus" interregional club of leaders, and information about the contest of journalists for author materials on extremism and terrorism prevention, meeting of antiterrorist commission, working group on implementation of complex plan of counteraction to ideol and a meeting dedicated to the prevention of extremist ideology in the youth environment, which was held at the Committee on National Policy of the Parliament of the KChR.

N.A. Bondarenko, the Children's Rights Ombudsman, noted in a telephone conversation that the republic is constantly working with children who came from Syria to integrate them into the regional society; also, the Commission to assist persons who have decided to stop terrorist and extremist activities in the republic to adapt to peaceful life continues to operate.

The experts noted that the work must be continued and that it is necessary to involve various law enforcement agencies in combating terrorist and extremist activity based on the principles

¹³ Experts' estimates vary – from 100 to 200 people. About 40 people returned.

of systematic coordination and the coordination of their efforts (at present, these principles are not working).

Since the possession of a large number of firearms by people continues to be one of the factors of tension in society (the use of firearms and knives in fights is becoming quite common), it is necessary to create conditions for voluntary surrender.

It is necessary to develop interaction between representatives of religious organizations and public figures, to more actively highlight the positive results of their activities not only in the space of social networks, but also on television.

"The state should work closely with Muslim communities, now this work is negligible. It is the religious leaders who have to fight for the minds, the leaders are present in the republic, but one can't see active work, someone is afraid, someone has taken a passive position. In religious system there is no plan of propaganda work and there is no accountability. The Fund for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education in Moscow [23] is working in this direction, but so far it has no firm contact with religious figures from various regions of the Russian Federation.

At present, interest in religious education has fallen, since there is no single cycle from study to work. Therefore, it is now necessary for religious leaders to work actively to explain the basics of religion, so that young people understand "what is good and what is bad. The religious doctrine must be taught by a specialist who can work in schools and institutes after graduation. We need open dialogue platforms where religious figures can answer any questions from young people. The main task is to bring the participants to a dialogue, in the process of which it must be shown that the Wahhabi ideology builds a huge number of frameworks, in which a person is forced to live, in true Islam there is no such thing. At present, faced with recruitment a young person commits suicide, not seeing for himself a way out of this situation, and at this point it is necessary to show that there is an alternative [24].

The analysis of the regional media and the survey of the expert community in Karachay-Cherkessia allows us to say that the situation in the Republic is stable. The region is constantly confronting threats of a terrorist nature, which so far have been successfully contained. The most effective methods of counteraction include the coordinated work of the executive authorities, law enforcement agencies, religious and non-governmental organizations, but tension factors remain, among which the most significant are the dispersed nature of radical cells and the continued growth of adherents to radical views, especially among young people. Despite the active work of the executive authorities, law enforcement agencies, religious and public organizations to counter extremism and terrorism, it is not yet possible to eradicate these phenomena.

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