

Muslim Lawyer Flees Amid Sharia Law Threats

By [Nikolaus von Twickel](#)

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Muslim lawyer Dagir Khasavov appearing Tuesday in a program on Ren-TV.

A Muslim lawyer has gone into hiding amid threats and a barrage of criticism after he publicly demanded the creation of Sharia courts in the country.

Dagir Khasavov canceled an interview with Ekho Moskvyy and went to an undisclosed safe house Thursday after armed men thought to be from Chechnya appeared at the station's premises on Novy Arbat, Khasavov's son Arslan wrote on his [blog](#).

He said the men had identified themselves as members of Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov's security service.

Kadyrov issued an angry [statement](#) earlier this week in which he accused Khasavov, who hails from Chechnya, of provoking Muslims and damaging Islam.

Arslan Khasavov said Friday that his family was being threatened.

"We receive threats, although not from serious people," he [told](#) the Rapsi news agency. He refused to elaborate. Khasavov did not confirm a report by the BBC's Russian Service that his father had left the country.

The Investigative Committee [said](#) Friday that it is looking into whether Khasavov's comments violate Article 282 of the Criminal Code, which bans inciting national or religious hatred.

Dagir Khasavov said in a television interview Tuesday that Muslim believers reject the country's court system and that attempts to prevent the creation of Sharia courts would end in bloodshed.

"We will flood the city with blood," he [told](#) Ren-TV.

His comments triggered a wave of heated criticism. The liberal Yabloko party [called upon authorities](#) to open a criminal case against Khasavov. Muslim clerics stressed that their believers respect the Constitution, which stipulated the separation of church and state.

Experts pointed out that, despite being unconstitutional, Sharia courts already exist in the country.

"In practice such courts already work in the rural North Caucasus," said Alexander Verkhovsky of the Sova Center, which tracks extremism and xenophobia.

Arslan Khasavov suggested that Ren-TV had aired his father's quotes out of context.

"Why has the full recording not been shown?" he wrote on his blog.

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