

Police Charge 9 With Membership of Banned Islamist Group

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia said on Friday nine suspected militants were charged with belonging to outlawed Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which police said had planned bomb attacks on civilian targets in Moscow.

Police said they found firearms, explosives and counterfeit currency worth \$1 million and 2 million euros (\$2.5 million) during a raid on the apartments of Russian and Tajik citizens earlier this month.

At the time, law enforcement officials said they detained 18 suspected Hizb ut-Tahrir activists. It was not immediately clear whether some or all of the 18 remained in custody.

"Nine citizens of Russia and the Republic of Tajikistan have been charged ... on suspicion of organizing activities of the international terrorist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir and having in their possession explosives, weapons and ammunition," the ministry said in a statement

on its website.

Five of those charged were accused of leading cells of the organization, which has gained a foothold through much of the former Soviet Union, especially in Central Asia and the predominantly Muslim regions of central Russia.

The Interior Ministry told Russian newswires that it had tracked the alleged cells since 2010 and that their leaders had planned to bomb a railway track near a Moscow train station on Nov. 4, 2010 — an attack police said they had prevented.

The ministry said Hizb ut-Tahrir was trying to capitalize on an Islamist insurgency in Russia's North Caucasus region by drawing youth from the predominantly Muslim region into its ranks and distributing extremist literature.

Russia is fighting an uphill battle to contain North Caucasus militants who wage daily violence to create an Islamist state a few hundred kilometers from where Moscow plans to hold the 2014 Winter Olympics.

The insurgency's leader, Chechen-born Doku Umarov, took responsibility for a suicide bombing at Moscow's busiest airport, Domodedovo, last year that killed 37.

Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been banned in Russia since 2003 but operates legally in some other countries, is more active in other parts of Russia, including the regions of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

The group says it eschews violence, but its stated goal of working toward a global Islamist state has made it the target of secular governments, though the group operates more freely in Western states.

The group is among the suspects in a deadly attack on Tatarstan's top religious leader and his assistant in July.

In 2007, 12 Hizb-ut-Tahrir members were convicted and sentenced to up to eight years in jail in Russia's Volga River province of Tatarstan for inciting a coup.

(Reuters, AP)

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