

Crimean Deputy PM Accuses Tatar Leader of Recruiting Islamic State Militants

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Crimea's Deputy Prime Minister Ruslan Balbek

Crimea's Deputy Prime Minister Ruslan Balbek has accused a former Crimean Tatar leader of recruiting members for Islamic State in Ukraine, state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported Friday.

Mustafa Dzhemilev, a former leader of the Crimean Tatar assembly, and his successor Refat Chubarov were both expelled from Crimea last year and banned from entering Russia after being accused of extremism.

Balbek said the leaders in exile had now surrounded themselves with Crimean radicals on the Ukrainian mainland, some of whom had fought for Islamic State.

"Today they form a nucleus around which they mobilize people of different nationalities who adhere to a radical religious ideology. It is Dzhemilev who is recruiting radical [fighters]

for Islamic State today in Ukraine," he was cited as saying.

Balbek also said Dzhemilev had encouraged Crimean Muslims to join Islamic State so that their experience could later be used to stage subversive activities in Crimea, the report said.

Most Crimean Tatars, a Muslim minority who are indigenous to the peninsula and make up about 10 percent of the population, opposed the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014.

Crimean Tatar activists have accused Crimea's pro-Moscow leadership of a targeted crackdown on their community.

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