

Russian Wrestler Banned From Sport for Allegedly Vandalizing Temple

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A wrestler from Russia's republic of Dagestan in the North Caucasus — who was arrested for desecrating a Buddhist temple — will be banned from practicing professional sports in his home region, a Dagestan official was quoted by Komsomolskaya Pravda as saying Monday.

The freestyle wrestler was visiting the Russian republic of Kalmykia for an athletic tournament when he allegedly urinated at a shrine, kicked a statue of Buddha and posted a video of the alleged vandalism online.

He has been arrested and charged with crimes against freedom of conscience, the NTV television network reported.

The man will never again practice professional athletics in Dagestan, regardless of whether he is convicted, the regional Sports Ministry spokesman Gadzhimurad Akhmedov was quoted by Komsomolskaya Pravda as saying.

The father of the wrestler told NTV that the young man has “torn me apart by his action.” The father added he had no idea what motivated the 22-year-old athlete in his alleged assault on

the temple.

The video of the alleged vandalism prompted an outcry in Kalmykia, where local residents reportedly dragged the athlete from his hotel and forced him to apologize.

Dagestani Prime Minister Abdusamad Gamidov flew to Kalmykia in the wake of the incident to apologize to local residents.

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