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Putin Calls for a 'Revival' of Islamic Education in Russia

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Yegor Aleyev / TASS

President Vladimir Putin has promised government backing for Islamic religious education in Russia, in a bid to stave extremism and cater to Russia's large Muslim community.

Up to 20 million Muslims make up Russia's second-largest religious minority. Thousands of young radicalized Russians have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join jihadist fighters in recent years, making the country the largest source of foreign fighters in the war-torn region.

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At a meeting with Islamic religious figures on Wednesday, Russia's president pledged "undoubted support" for a "revival of Islamic education in Russia," the state-run TASS news agency reported.

"Traditional Islam is an integral part of the Russian cultural code, and the Muslim Ummah

[community], without any doubt, is a very important component of the multinational Russian people," he said.

During his meeting at the newly inaugurated Islamic academy in Kazan, Putin emphasized the important role of Russia's Muslim clergy in countering religious extremism.

"These ideas, even destructive ideas, can only be fought with the help of other ideas," TASS cited Putin as saying.

The president vowed to support Islamic religious education through partnerships with major state-backed universities and research centers.

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