

IS Claims Deadly Church Shooting in Russia on Forgiveness Sunday

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Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency

The Islamic State terror group has reportedly claimed responsibility for Sunday's deadly church shooting in Russia's predominantly Muslim region of Dagestan.

Five churchgoers were killed outside a church in the Dagestani city of Kizlyar when an assailant opened fire at parishioners returning from a Forgiveness Sunday church service. Orthodox Christians mark the day by asking one another for forgiveness before the 40-day Lent period leading up to Easter.

Local officials identified the gunman, who was shot dead by police at the scene, as a member of an IS sleeper cell, the RBC business portal [reported](#) on Sunday.

"An unidentified bearded man ran toward the church yelling 'Allah Akbar'," RBC [cited](#) Father Pavel, the dean of the church, as saying.

"When we heard the shots, we quickly closed the doors so that he couldn't get inside. He had a

gun and a knife,” Father Pavel said.

Police identified the attacker as Khalil Khalilov, a 22-year-old Dagestani resident.

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Стрельба у церкви в Кизляре попала на видео:<https://t.co/virzQQzgzS#Кизляр#Дарестан> pic.twitter.com/yzWzLYlDwt

— Пятый канал Новости (@5tv) [18 февраля 2018 г.](#)

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church [denounced](#) the deadly shooting in Kizlyar as a provocation intended to “trigger a confrontation between Orthodox [Christians] and Muslims, who for centuries lived in peace in the Caucasus.”

IS took responsibility for the shooting through its news agency but did not offer further evidence of its involvement, Reuters [reported](#) on Sunday.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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