

Russia Sentences 2 Crimean Tatars to Lengthy Prison Terms

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The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) carrying out an operation to detain four suspected cell members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. **FSB / TASS**

A court in southern Russia has sentenced two Crimean Tatars to 11 years in prison on charges of participating in a banned Islamic group, the Ukrainian news outlet Graty [reported](#) Friday.

The military court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced scholar Vadim Bektemirov to 11 years in a maximum-security penal colony and 64-year-old Zekirya Muratov to 11.5 years.

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The two Crimean Tatars — a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority which largely opposes Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine — were accused of taking part in Hizb ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamist group banned in Russia as “terrorist” but legal in Ukraine.

Prosecutors had requested sentences of 12 years for each defendant.

Bektemirov studied at the Faculty of Arabic Language and Literature before he was arrested in 2020. The Memorial human rights group has recognized him as a political prisoner.

Russia has prosecuted dozens of Crimean Tatars since annexing the peninsula, and rights campaigners accuse Moscow of targeting them for their vocal opposition to Russia's annexation of the peninsula.

“At least 332 people are currently being prosecuted in Russia, 89 of whom are being prosecuted in Crimea,” said Sergei Davidis, the head of Memorial’s political prisoners support program.

Last August, Russia [sentenced](#) four Crimean Tatars to between 12 and 18 years in prison for taking part in Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Ukraine later [accused](#) Russian security agents of detaining dozens of Crimean Tatars.

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