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Chechen Court Postpones Quran-Burning Trial

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Nikita Zhuravel. **Yelena Afonina / TASS**

A court in Russia's majority-Muslim republic of Chechnya has postponed the hearing against a teenager accused of burning the Quran and who was beaten while in custody by the son of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, media outlets reported Tuesday.

Nikita Zhuravel, 19, was detained in May on suspicion of publicly burning a Quran in the southern region of Volgograd.

Local authorities granted a request by Chechen authorities to have him stand trial in the majority-Muslim region despite warnings of human rights abuses under Kadyrov's rule.

According to Russia's state news agency RIA Novosti, Zhuravel's trial was postponed because neither the victims nor the witnesses involved in the case showed up in court.

Thirteen imams from mosques across Chechnya are listed as victims in the case, while four others are listed as witnesses.

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Kadyrov drew widespread criticism last month when he posted a video on social media of his 15-year-old son Adam beating Zhuravel inside a detention cell, praising him for "defending his religion."

Chechen police have not opened an investigation into the beating and the Kremlin has declined to comment on the video.

The Visaitovsky District Court in the Chechen capital of Grozny scheduled the next hearing in Zhuravel's trial for Nov. 2 and he is due to be held in pre-trial detention until April 20, 2024.

The teenager pleaded guilty to parts of the charges against him but denied that he had sought to disturb public order.

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