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Chechen Prosecutors Seek 3.5-Year Prison Sentence for Quran Burner

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Nikita Zhuravel. **Elena Afonina / TASS**

Prosecutors in Russia's republic of Chechnya have asked a court to sentence a young man accused of burning a Quran to 3.5 years in prison, the state-run news agency TASS reported Tuesday.

Nikita Zhuravel, 20, was detained in May on suspicion of publicly burning a Quran in the southern region of Volgograd.

Local authorities granted a request by Chechen law enforcement to have Zhuravel stand trial in the North Caucasus region despite concerns over human rights abuses under leader Ramzan Kadyrov's rule.

The Visaitovsky District Court in the Chechen capital of Grozny is scheduled to hand out the verdict against Zhuravel on Feb. 27.

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Prosecutors asked the court to sentence Zhuravel to three years and six months in a medium-security prison, according to a spokesperson.

The 20-year-old pleaded guilty to the charges of offending religious believers but denied that he sought to disturb public order.

In August, Zhuravel accused Kadyrov's son Adam, who was 15 years old at the time, of beating him in detention.

The Chechen leader later posted a video of the beating on social media, praising his son for "defending his religion."

Law enforcement authorities in Chechnya have not opened an investigation into the beating and the Kremlin has declined to comment on the video.

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