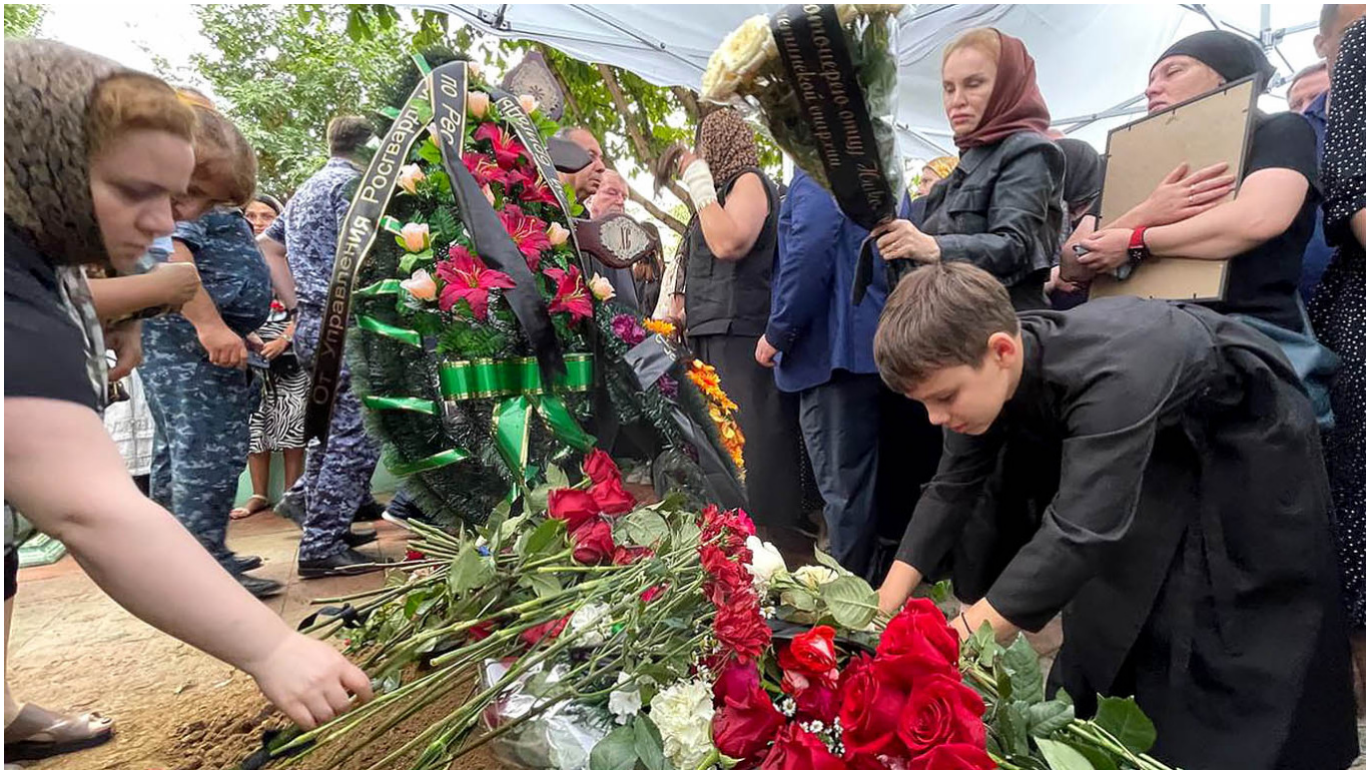
The Moscow Times
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Dagestan Church and Synagogue Attack Toll Hits 22

By AFP

July 01, 2024



The funeral of Orthodox priest Nikolai Kotelnikov killed in a terrorist attack in Derbent. **Gyanzhevi Gadzhibalayev / TASS**

The number of people killed in a wave of coordinated attacks in Russia's southern Dagestan region last month has risen to 22, the regional head said Monday.

Gunmen simultaneously attacked two churches, two synagogues and a police checkpoint in two cities in Dagestan on June 23.

On Monday, regional Governor Sergei Melikov said the number of those killed had risen to 22 — after a previously reported toll of 21.

"One police officer died the next day from severe wounds. In total 17 police officers and five civilians," were killed, Russian news agencies quoted Melikov as saying.

The Kremlin has dismissed fears the attacks could mark a return to the kind of separatist violence that marred the historically restive region throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

Related article: What We Know About the Church and Synagogue Attacks in Dagestan

The attacks came just three months after Islamic State (IS) fighters killed more than 140 in an assault on a Moscow concert hall, the deadliest terror attack in Russia for almost two decades.

Melikov also said Monday that one of the assailants had taken part in a riot at Dagestan's main airport in October.

Hundreds of men had stormed the runway of Makhachkala Airport in an anti-Israel riot when news spread on social media that a flight from Tel Aviv was due to land in the Muslim-majority region.

That had come amid rising tensions over the war in Gaza.

In the June attack, two synagogues were targeted in Makhachkala and the city of Derbent, where a fire started by Molotov cocktails completely destroyed the interior of the building.

A Russian Orthodox priest was also killed.

Melikov also hinted Monday that the West had been involved in whipping up the "ideological state" of the assailants, without providing evidence or specifying to who he was referring.

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