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Russian Father of 29 Signs Military Contract to Fight in Ukraine, Local Official Says

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Vakhid Valiyev and his family. **Anna Karabanova / VK**

A 57-year-old father to 29 biological and adopted children signed a military contract to fight in Ukraine, a local official said Tuesday, as regional authorities across Russia double efforts to recruit soldiers for the war.

Vakhid Valiyev, who is from the republic of Bashkortostan, said the decision to enlist "was not easy for his large family, but he made it out of a sense of patriotism and civic duty," according to Anna Karabanova, who heads the Blagoveshchensk district.

"Two of our sons are serving in the special military operation. I have no right not to help," Karabanova quoted the man as saying, using the Kremlin's preferred term for the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

While details of Valiyev's military service were not disclosed, Karabanova praised his family

as “exemplary” for their participation in local community projects.

His decision to enlist comes amid Russia’s efforts to boost recruitment, with regions offering increased military contract payments. Bashkortostan offers a one-time sign-on bonus of 505,000 rubles ($5,500) to soldiers, in addition to federal government payments.

Bashkortostan has the highest confirmed military death toll in Ukraine, with 2,705 soldiers from the region reported killed, according to data from BBC Russia and Mediazona.

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