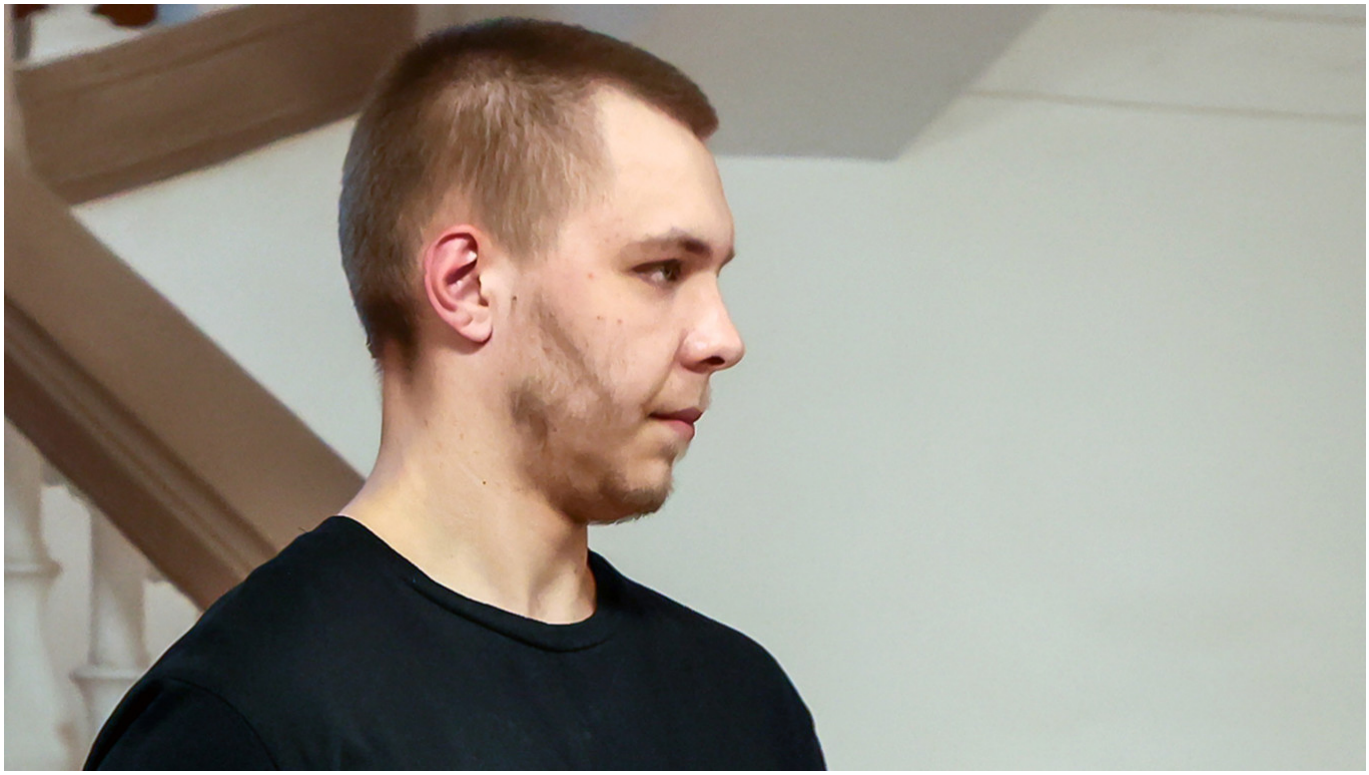
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Whereabouts of Young Russian Man Jailed for Burning Quran Unknown 3 Months After Prison Transfer

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Nikita Zhuravel. **Dmitry Rogulin / TASS**

The whereabouts of a young Russian man imprisoned for burning the Quran and later convicted of treason remain unknown three months after his reported transfer to another correctional facility, lawyers and officials said Thursday.

Nikita Zhuravel, 22, is serving a 14-year prison sentence after being found guilty in 2024 of offending religious believers and treason for allegedly sending footage of Russian military equipment to Ukraine's SBU security service.

The rights group Memorial has designated him a political prisoner.

Eva Merkacheva, a member of Russia's Human Rights Council, said Zhuravel's lawyer has not been able to contact him since Dec. 24, shortly after his transfer from Moscow to a penal colony in the Ulyanovsk region.

“His family and I are worried about Nikita’s life and health, especially since there is no proof that he is alive,” his lawyer, Andrei Sabinin, wrote in a letter shared by Merkacheva on Telegram.

Related article: Russian Beaten By Kadyrov's Son for Quran-Burning Charged With Treason

Russia’s Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) denied that Zhuravel had gone missing, saying his mother had been notified of his transfer “in the prescribed manner” within four days of his arrival at an undisclosed facility.

“On Jan. 21, 2026, the convict had already received a letter from his mother,” FSIN said in a statement.

Merkacheva disputed the claim, saying Zhuravel’s mother had not been told his location and therefore could not have written to him.

“FSIN’s response in this situation is nearly a mockery,” she told journalist Ksenia Sobchak.

Zhuravel, who is from Crimea, was detained in the Volgograd region in May 2023 and later transferred to the republic of Chechnya on the orders of Russian Investigative Committee Chairman Alexander Bastrykin.

He has accused Adam Kadyrov, the teenage son of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, of beating him in pre-trial detention in August 2023. Ramzan Kadyrov confirmed the accusation and shared a video of the assault on Telegram.

Russian law enforcement authorities never investigated the beating.

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