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Investigators Search Dagestan Government Offices Over Illegal Permits Linked to Flood Damage

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Flood damage in the village of Urkarakh, Dagestan. **Gyanzhevi Gadzhibalayev / TASS**

Law enforcement authorities raided several government offices in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan on Thursday, targeting officials accused of issuing illegal building permits that worsened the impact of recent flooding in the region.

The floods, triggered by two weeks of heavy rainfall in late March and early April, killed at least seven people and displaced more than 6,200. Russia declared a federal-level state of emergency earlier this month for both Dagestan and the neighboring republic of Chechnya, where no casualties were reported.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's top investigative body, said law enforcement agents searched Dagestan's regional ministry of natural resources and Dagmeliovodkhoz, an agency tasked with reservoir, canal and dam maintenance.

Investigators allege that officials in the capital, Makhachkala, systematically ignored safety protocols by allowing developers to build multi-story projects directly in flood-prone areas.

“Insufficient oversight by the authorities contributed to the risk of flooding in the surrounding areas,” the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

It did not say whether any officials at the ministry of natural resources or Dagmeliovodkhoz were arrested.

Related article: Dagestan Was Already Facing an Infrastructure Crisis. Then Came the Floods.

No one was reported to have died as a result of flooding in Makhachkala. The Head of Dagestan, Sergei Melikov, previously blamed flooding in the capital city on “reckless” real estate development along the embankment of a local river.

Earlier in April, the Investigative Committee said it arrested the chief engineer and former CEO of a company responsible for maintaining a dam in Dagestan that breached and flooded nearby towns and a highway, which led to multiple deaths. The pair was accused of environmental and safety violations.

Dagestan, a mountainous region with a population of over 3 million, suffers from poor infrastructure and the intensifying effects of climate change, which amplifies the impact of natural disasters like flooding.

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