

Russian Supreme Court Bans Ingush Sufi Muslim Order as 'Extremist'

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Russia's Supreme Court on Wednesday [outlawed](#) the [Batal Hajji brotherhood](#), a closed Sufi Muslim order originating from the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia.

The court granted a [request](#) from state prosecutors to designate the order as an "extremist" organization for "providing material support for bandit insurgents of the North Caucasus."

The Prosecutor General's Office said Batal Hajji members were linked to numerous attacks on Russian police and military in the North Caucasus and orchestrated the deadly [2009 Nevsky Express train bombing](#) claimed by Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov.

The prosecutor also said that Batal Hajji affiliates aided the [deadly March 2024 attack](#) on the Crocus City Hall concert venue near Moscow and the [assassination](#) of Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov the same year by selling weapons and ammunition to the perpetrators.

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“More than 100 members of the order have been convicted of the illicit trafficking of means for committing acts of terror. Leaders and members of the community organized illegal channels to supply foreign-made firearms from abroad,” the prosecutor’s office said in a statement published Wednesday.

Russian authorities [designated](#) the brotherhood’s so-called “military wing” a “terrorist” organization in 2023.

The Batal Hajji brotherhood was founded in the 19th century by Ingush Sheikh Batal Hajji Belkhoroev, a pupil of the Chechen Muslim mystic Kunta-Hajji (Kunta Kishiev).

Membership in the closed order, which numbers around 20,000 members, is passed down strictly by birthright.

The order’s members held a handful of key government roles and a near monopoly on Ingushetia’s construction industry in the 1990s and early 2000s before a clash with the republic’s new Kremlin-appointed leadership led to their fall from power.

Around 100 of its members allegedly joined the Russian military in 2022 as part of the Batal Hajji Rapid Response Unit, a part of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov's Akhmat military unit within the Russian army, [according](#) to the exiled news website Meduza.

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