

# The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (III), Governance, Elections, Rule of Law

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## *Executive Summary*

Armed conflict in the North Caucasus is the most violent in Europe today. At least 1,225 people were its victims in 2012 (700 killed, 525 wounded), and at least 242 were killed and 253 wounded in the first six months of 2013. The violence is greatest in Dagestan, then in Chechnya and Ingushetia, and the latter situation deteriorated in 2012. Unresolved disputes over territory, administrative boundaries, land and resources are important root causes of the violence, along with ethnic and religious tensions, the state's incapacity to ensure fair political representation, rule of law, governance and economic growth. The region's internal fragmentation and insufficient integration with the rest of the Russian Federation contribute to the political and social alienation of its residents.

Since first coming to power in 1999, Vladimir Putin has rolled back the un-precedented autonomy Russia's regions secured after the Soviet Union's collapse and created a highly centralised state. Many residents of the North Caucasus feel estranged from decisions made and carried out by federal institutions based in Moscow. Large-scale local violations and questionable practices during the 2011 parliamentary and 2012 presidential elections further undercut the state's popular legitimacy.

This feeling is likely to be further exacerbated after 8 September, when new leaders will be indirectly selected in Dagestan and Ingushetia, instead of directly elected, as had been promised in a major reform offered by former President Dmitry Medvedev. In March 2013, the Duma pulled back the restoration of direct elections of regional leaders in some cases. Citing concerns about their destabilising potential, it gave (elected) region-level assemblies, including the seven in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD), the authority to select the chief executives that had been exercised by the president since 2004. Citizens thus continue to have few means to hold their republic's authorities democratically accountable or to meaningfully participate in political life. Local polls could have offered a way to improve the quality of governance and helped the North Caucasus's integration with the rest of the country.

Lack of accountability and transparency make the governance system more amenable to capture by informal networks, often based on kinship and ethnic ties that bring together local strongmen, business and politicians. Such networks dominate political life, capture resources and block opportunities for young professionals to advance. Many local interest groups are well connected to federal authorities and represented in federal institutions, where they tend to pursue self-interest rather than constituents' agendas. Incumbents are challenged in a few republics by the opposition, public associations and religious groups. But these have been unable to secure improvement in governance or restore the checks and balances that might advance effective conflict resolution and development.

Almost two decades of abusive behaviour by law enforcement personnel have eroded citizens' belief in the rule of law and pushed some victims into the Islamist insurgency, as earlier Crisis Group reporting has described. Impunity has embedded violence in security-service practices, even when investigating petty crimes. Human rights groups have extensively documented enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions, but victims lack effective domestic remedies. The last hope for

redress for many is the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), where Russia has the largest docket of pending cases.

All this contributes to the population's lack of trust in institutions. For a significant number in this predominantly Muslim region, the rules of the game of the secular state have been discredited, increasing the attractiveness of more conservative models based on Islamic and customary law and undermining fledging attempts to win local support for counter-terrorism. Many residents are looking for alternative ways to organise their communities. Especially in the eastern republics of the North Caucasus, both Sufi and Salafi communities are creating parallel realities with alternative institutions.

This report, the third in the inaugural series by Crisis Group's North Caucasus Project on the challenges of integration, analyses governmental, political and legal issues. It follows two October 2012 studies on the region's ethnic and national groups, their disputes and grievances; the Islamic factor and Salafi-inspired insurgency; and the government's religious and counter-insurgency policies. A subsequent report on the economy and social issues will complete the examination of the root causes of violence and deadly conflict. The recommendations that follow relate to the analysis in the first three reports.

## *Recommendations*

*To address ethnic conflicts and tensions*

### **To the government of the Russian Federation:**

1. Develop a comprehensive program to increase social, political, cultural and economic integration of the North Caucasus with the rest of the country and reduce xenophobia toward its residents.

### **To the governments of the North Caucasus regions:**

2. Reduce tensions between ethnic groups in the North Caucasus by:
  - a) ensuring equal access to government employment, including in local government and law enforcement, in areas of ethnic tensions;
  - b) developing and carrying out, in consultation with local communities and leaders, comprehensive land reform in the region; and resolving land disputes, beginning with problems related to distant pastures;
  - c) seeking mutually acceptable solutions to territorial disputes, starting with the less challenging conflicts and building up to more complex disputes; and
  - d) ensuring inclusive, ethnically-mixed education that promotes tolerance and multi-culturalism aimed at overcoming the concept of “ethnic ownership” of territory and developing civic national identity.

*To improve efficiency and local acceptance of counter-insurgency efforts*

### **To the government of the Russian Federation:**

3. Give republic governments greater leverage and authority over security services operating on their territory.
4. Continue reform of the internal affairs ministry, including changes to the evaluation system for units and individuals so as to discourage corruption and unlawful methods, including falsification of evidence, in pursuit of criminal cases; and increase the professionalism of lower-rank personnel in the North Caucasus by vigorous training programs.
5. Pursue more resolutely criminal cases on enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture and other human rights violations, including by creating a federal inter-departmental commission to locate missing persons in the North Caucasus and increasing the personnel and engagement in the region of the federal Investigative Committee’s special unit for police crimes.
6. Create a federal psycho-social and medical rehabilitation program for law-enforcement personnel who have served in North Caucasus counter-terrorism operations, including by building or renovating rehabilitation facilities in the region; and ensure that all personnel and family members of killed or injured personnel receive compensation entitled to them without bureaucratic hurdles.

**To the governments of the North Caucasus regions:**

7. Strengthen the focus of counter-insurgency efforts on soft-power measures that include dialogue with moderate Salafis and negotiations to encourage insurgents to lay down their weapons and reintegrate into peaceful life.
8. Support and strengthen the mandates of the republic commissions for the rehabilitation of fighters and ex-fighters who have served their prison terms.
9. Ban people's militias that become engaged in ethnic or religious conflicts; and prosecute members involved in crimes, including killings and disappearances.

**To the National Anti-terrorist Committee:**

10. Avoid creating new insurgents by ensuring the security of the local population during counter-terrorist operations; ceasing punitive actions against insurgents' family members; and otherwise preventing illegal violence and revenge, including by security officials.
11. Work toward fighters' peaceful surrenders by engaging their willing relatives and civil society leaders.
12. Mediate conflicts of interest between federal ministries and institutions concerning the return and rehabilitation of insurgents.

**To the Russian State Duma:**

13. Pass a new amnesty for North Caucasus fighters, to include more serious crimes such as participation in attacks on security services (Article 317 of the Criminal Code).

*To improve religious policy*

**To the National Anti-terrorist Committee and federal and regional agencies responsible for religious policy:**

14. Maintain neutrality toward competing religious groups, including by:
  - a) ceasing repression of fundamentalists, unless they violate the law;
  - b) facilitating Sufi-Salafi dialogue in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, while increasing efforts to integrate non-violent Salafi communities and working with non-violent leaders to make them allies in overcoming extremism; and
  - c) combating discriminatory rhetoric and practices based on religion.

**To religious leaders in the North Caucasus:**

15. Continue dialogue aimed at overcoming sectarian conflicts, prejudices and hostilities between adherents of various strands in Islam.

*To strengthen state institutions so as to increase their legitimacy and more effectively moderate conflict*

**To the government of the Russian Federation:**

16. Reform the political system to reestablish democratic procedures, including competitive free elections at all levels; and as a priority, restore direct election of regional leaders.
17. Establish and apply administrative and/or criminal sanctions for individuals who engage in multiple voting, ballot box stuffing and other election violations; and simplify requirements for election observation to allow broader domestic civic participation, including by non-party organisations and groups.
18. Ensure reasonable decentralisation, including greater fiscal and political autonomy of republic governments; simplify bureaucratic procedures for local governments to receive and disburse funds; and streamline reporting obligations, while strengthening the state's monitoring capacity to combat corruption.
19. End law-enforcement impunity and investigate systematically and effectively within the framework of the law criminal activities of clan networks.
20. Increase judicial independence and improve the quality of investigations, including by changing the reporting system and combating corruption.
21. Invest in a serious effort to introduce the rule of law, open government and political and religious pluralism in Chechnya.

**To the Council of Europe:**

22. Continue monitoring North Caucasus conflicts; increase engagement with them; and press Russia to more fully implement European Court of Human Rights decisions.

**Moscow/Brussels, 6 September 2013**





# The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (III), Governance, Elections, Rule of Law

## I. Introduction

The armed conflict in the North Caucasus continues with at least 242 killed and 253 wounded in the first six months of 2013.<sup>1</sup> Dagestan remains the epicentre, with almost daily insurgent attacks or security operations. There have been eight major terrorist incidents since January, four in Dagestan, two each in Ingushetia and Chechnya, following a year that saw four suicide bombings in Dagestan and one apiece in Chechnya, Ingushetia and North Ossetia. On 3 July 2013, the leader of the Islamist insurgency, Doku Umarov, publicly cancelled his seventeen-month moratorium on hitting soft targets in Russia and urged his fighters to disrupt the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.<sup>2</sup>

The violence has multiple causes. Insurgents fighting under a radical Salafism banner seek a regional political unit founded on Sharia (Islamic law) and attack Russian state officials and security forces that mostly try to eradicate the insurgency with heavy-handed security measures and intimidation. Yet, as Crisis Group has described, most Salafis are peaceful but have difficulties integrating into secular social and economic life. Their visibility is increasing, especially in eastern parts of the region, where the general level of religiosity is high: mosques and prayer rooms abound, religious holidays are public holidays, covered women are common in public, and Islamic educational institutions function.<sup>3</sup>

Another cause is the deep sectarian conflict that for two decades has divided North Caucasian Muslims into traditionalists and fundamentalists (the latter mostly Salafis), especially in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. The state sided with the traditionalists, whose religious leaders tend to recognise secular authority, and in effect banned and prosecuted Salafis, radicalising parts of the community. But in 2010 the authorities in Dagestan, Ingushetia and Karachay-Cherkessia began to liberalise their re-

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<sup>1</sup> “Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе в первом квартале 2013 г”; “Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе во втором квартале 2013 г.” [“Infographics. Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus in the first quarter of 2013”; “Infographics. Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus in the second quarter of 2013”], *Caucasian Knot*, 26 July, 29 May 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The insurgency is a network of disparate groups from different regions, grouped under the Caucasus Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz), proclaimed in 2007 as the final step in transforming Chechen separatism into a region-wide, radical Islamist-based project within “global jihad”. It is led by Doku Umarov, a Chechen commander who has fought Russia since 1995 and is titled “emir”. Crisis Group Europe Report N°221, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (II), Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, 19 October 2012, pp. 13-19. “Умаров призвал вооруженное подполье к срыву Олимпиады в Сочи” [“Umarov called for armed resistance to the disruption of the Olympic Games in Sochi”], *Caucasian Knot*, 3 July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, op. cit. It was published simultaneously with Crisis Group Europe Report N°220, *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (I), Ethnicity and Conflict*, 19 October 2012.

gimes toward moderate Salafis, engaged in dialogue with their leaders and created commissions to assist peaceful surrender and rehabilitation of fighters, all of which contributed to a reduction in violence.

Crisis Group's reporting in 2012 described two models of counter-insurgency: the one applied in Chechnya under Ramzan Kadyrov that prioritises heavy-handed measures and severe intimidation of Salafis and their families; the other introduced by former President Magomedov in Dagestan that opened some space for dialogue and integration of non-violent fundamentalist groups.<sup>4</sup> Since then, Magomedov has been replaced by Ramazan Abdulatipov, who, with Moscow's support, has followed an approach much closer to the Chechen one. The result has been an escalation in violence.<sup>5</sup>

The region's unique ethno-cultural and religious diversity has created strong local mechanisms of accommodation and conflict management but also been conducive to deadly conflict. Violence was greatest in Chechnya, where a separatist struggle led to two wars, and the Prigorodny district of North Ossetia, the area of armed conflict between Ingush and Ossetians. Others such as the Circassians, Kabardins, Balkars, Karachays, Cossacks, Russians and the peoples of Dagestan also have historical grievances and current disputes structured along ethnic lines. These have escalated to confrontations and mass brawls, attacks on individuals and threatening rhetoric. Most disputes, predominantly over administrative boundaries, land and resources, have not yet escalated to armed conflict. But still unresolved territorial conflicts and tensions, as in the Prigorodny district, around the Aukhovsky district and other parts of Dagestan, in Kabardino-Balkaria, over the Ingush-Chechen administrative border and in multi-ethnic Stavropol Krai, produce acute frustration and anger that also feed the insurgency.

To avoid further deterioration, Russian federal, regional and local authorities need to start disentangling the complex knots of the conflicts in order to find solutions acceptable to the parties. This third report in Crisis Group's initial series on *The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration* examines the extent to which this is being done, and what improvements with respect to governance, elections, law enforcement and the judiciary might be possible.

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the different counter-insurgency methods, see Crisis Group Report, *Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, op. cit., pp. 30-33.

<sup>5</sup> See Section IV.A below.

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## II. Russia between Decentralisation and the “Vertical of Power”

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Under its 1993 constitution, Russia is a federal state with a republican government organised on dual principles of territory and ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> The federal regions are constitutionally equal but differ greatly in size, economic status and levels of political autonomy.<sup>7</sup> In the 1990s, the republics challenged the centre with unprecedented autonomy claims, and President Boris Yeltsin, needing ethnic republics’ support, made numerous concessions.<sup>8</sup> The 1992 Federal Treaty gave all ethnic republics special status and statehood attributes (constitutions, parliaments, supreme courts, presidents, official languages) and recognised their rights to local property and resources.<sup>9</sup> Given the centrifugal tendencies and economic difficulties, a semi-confederal arrangement was probably the only way to halt further breakup of the country, but by mid-decade numerous regional laws contradicted federal ones, the division of power was unclear, and the centre’s capacity to collect taxes was dramatically reduced, facilitating state capture at the regional level by local elites.<sup>10</sup>

Yeltsin’s successor, Vladimir Putin, sought to reconsolidate power and, by the mid-2000s, had produced what has been called “a federation without federalism” and what authorities named “the vertical of power”.<sup>11</sup> These changes affected all Rus-

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<sup>6</sup> The Russian Federation includes 21 republics, 46 oblasts (regions), two cities of federal importance, nine Krai (territories), one autonomous region and four autonomous areas. The chief executive position is called “governor” in oblasts, autonomous regions, areas and cities, and “head” in all national republics except Dagestan whose chief executive retains the title “president” until 1 January 2015. Throughout this report the terms “chief executive” and “regional leader” are used interchangeably.

<sup>7</sup> The federative principles and powers of regions are outlined in Articles 65-79 of the constitution. The status of each republic is defined by its constitution and of each Krai by laws adopted by its legislative assembly. Republics have a right to their own languages, to be used in state institutions together with Russian. The borders between regions can be changed by mutual consent. The Russian federation defines the system of federal legislative, executive and judicial powers and runs its institutions in the regions. The federal centre is responsible for courts, prosecution, principles of taxation, etc. To perform their functions, federal executives can create territorial agencies in regions and appoint officials. Constitution of the Russian Federation.

<sup>8</sup> The 1990 draft Union Treaty to succeed the USSR and that came out in the midst of the political struggle between Mikhail Gorbachev and Yeltsin stated that it could be signed by both the Union and autonomous republics, implicitly abolishing differences in their status. It is now seen as a manoeuvre by Gorbachev to weaken Yeltsin’s power base, the Russian Federation, by encouraging autonomous republics within it to declare their sovereignty. Yeltsin responded with his slogan encouraging them to “take as much sovereignty as you can swallow”. The Chechen national movement later used the treaty to support its secessionist claim.

<sup>9</sup> In 1994-1998, the federal government and the federation’s subjects signed bilateral treaties that offered special provisions and prerogatives to individual regions, often a result of informal bargaining and in some cases in contradiction to the federal Constitution. Elena Chebankova, “Adaptive Federalism and Federation in Putin’s Russia”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 60, no. 6 (2008), p. 993. Chechnya and Tatarstan refused to sign the Federal Treaty and boycotted several federal elections; Chechnya declared its independence in November 1991. Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 9-16.

<sup>10</sup> Local elites often helped local enterprises avoid taxes.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, “The impact of Putin’s Federative Reforms on Democratization in Russia”, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2003), pp. 114-153; Cameron Ross (ed.), *Regional Politics in Russia* (Manchester, 2002). “Путин: ‘Важнейшая задача Госсовета – укрепление вертикали власти’” [“Putin: ‘The main aim of State Council is strengthening the vertical of power’”], NEWSRU.COM, 22 November 2000.

sia but were particularly evident in the North Caucasus, with its subsidised economy, weak political parties and local institutions and much greater freedom for the security services to use violence.

A commission led by Putin's close associate, Dmitry Kozak, was established to delineate powers between the regions and the centre. The latter regained the right to appoint the heads of federal ministries and services at the regional level.<sup>12</sup> New tax legislation was passed to distribute more revenue to the centre; the budgetary system was formally centralised, and regions were instructed to join the federal treasury system to manage their funds.<sup>13</sup>

#### A. *Federative Relations Today*

In 2000, as part of the re-centralisation, regions were combined, and Russia was divided into seven *okrugs* (super-districts), to each of which presidential envoys, with no constitutional basis, were appointed.<sup>14</sup> The North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD) was created in 2010, when it was separated from the South Federal District. Now the smallest federal district and the only one in which Russians are not the majority, its capital is Pyatigorsk; Alexander Khloponin is its envoy.<sup>15</sup> It does not include the Republic of Adygea, historically connected to it, but does include Stavropol Krai, to the discontent and public protest of Cossacks and Russian nationalists.<sup>16</sup> A strategy meant to govern socio-economic development of the NCFD was adopted in 2010 and supported by a program in 2012. President Dmitry Medvedev identified creation of centres for economic growth, industrial and tourist-recreational zones and coordination of government and business strategies as their key goals, to be supervised by Khloponin.<sup>17</sup>

The ability of regional leaders and citizens to participate in decisions, influence federal policy and lobby regional interests via the Federation Council – the upper chamber of the parliament, with two representatives from each region – has been significantly curbed. Republic heads, governors and chairs of regional assemblies no longer sit in the Council by right; instead, the chief executive appoints one delegate, and the assemblies select the other. While many Council members (often known as senators) have little or no association with their territory, in the North Caucasus's

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<sup>12</sup> For example, for the internal affairs, emergency and justice ministries, as well as the migration, federal executive punishments, bailiffs, drug control and intelligence (FSB) services.

<sup>13</sup> Donna Bahry, "The New Federalism and the Paradoxes of Regional Sovereignty in Russia", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 37, no. 2 (2005), p. 138; Elena Chebankova, *op. cit.*, p. 993.

<sup>14</sup> The envoy is tasked to implement presidential policy; he organises decisions of the federal authorities, implements key cadre policies as defined by the president and presents reports and recommendations to the president. Presidential Decree 849, 13 May 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Khloponin has been presidential envoy since 2010 for the six NCFD republics (Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, North Ossetia-Alania) and Stavropol Krai.

<sup>16</sup> Circassians are divided into Kabardines, Circassians, Adyghes and Shapsugs and live in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Adygea, Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai. In a move to reduce the federation units (they have gone from 89 to 83 since 2000), attempts were made to unify Adygea and Krasnodar Krai, which resulted in mobilisation of the Circassians and their growing aspirations for autonomy. For more on Circassians and ethnic tensions in Stavropol Krai, see Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25, 29-30.

<sup>17</sup> "Правительство утвердило программу развития СКФО до 2025 года" ["The government adopted the development program for NCFD till 2025"], Rosbalt, 13 December 2012.

case only one senator fits this description.<sup>18</sup> The others tend to maintain strong ties with local elites or business.

The influence of local constituencies has been reduced in the State Duma (lower chamber of parliament) since 2005, when single-mandate seats were abolished. Members were elected from party lists by proportional representation, and the electoral threshold for parties was raised from 5 per cent to 7 per cent of the vote. Parties needed 50,000 members from at least half of Russia's 83 regions to be registered, until an April 2012 amendment to the law on political parties significantly simplified registration requirements, allowing parties to register with only 500 members in half of Russia's regions. Federal parties can still not contest elections as coalitions, and there are no regional parties. Since 2008, President Putin's United Russia has had a majority in all regional assemblies, and almost all regional heads are members of it.<sup>19</sup> Federal parties are mostly inactive in the North Caucasus between campaigns, and their programs rarely address local concerns.

All Russia's 83 federal regions have their own governors and legislative assemblies. Cities and municipal districts also have their own executives and councils. In practice, however, the North Caucasus governance model has become what many residents call neo-colonial, with appointed elites ruling and reporting to their supervisors, not local constituencies. Their role, according to local activists, is to ensure their region's compliance with the centre, election results and freedom for security services to conduct operations unobstructed, including the use of indiscriminate force.<sup>20</sup> Russia's leading expert on federalism explains: "All federal regions are governed in a colonial way, but when a region's population is ethnically different [from Russia's majority] the perception of colonialism is stronger. But unlike in classical colonies from where resources are generally being extracted, huge resources are being invested in the Caucasus. It's a supercentralised system that tries to solve North Caucasus problems by pouring in money, rather than classical colonial governance".<sup>21</sup>

Russia's president has appointed and dismissed regional chief executives since 2004.<sup>22</sup> Direct elections were restored in 2012, but the Duma partly reversed this reform after Putin's re-election.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nikita Ivanov, a 37-year-old ethnic Russian senator representing Ingushetia, is the exception. A Muscovite, he made his career in the presidential administration and Putin's United Russia party, overseeing the Kremlin-created youth movement "Nashi" and later advising on youth politics.

<sup>19</sup> Electoral reforms in 2004-2006 outlawed electoral blocs, a minimal turnout threshold and the "against all" option on ballots. In 2006-2007 the justice ministry closed sixteen parties as too small. In 2011 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the reforms violated Article 11 of the European convention on "freedom of assembly" and noted that Russia had the highest membership requirements in Europe. *Republican party v. Russia*, 12 April 2011; "Краткая история закручивания гаек в России" ["Short story of screw-tightening in Russia"], Forbes.ru, 20 July 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group interviews, local activists, Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria, Makhachkala, Dagestan, December 2012.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interview, Natalia Zubarevich, professor of economic and social geography at Moscow State University, Moscow, August 2013.

<sup>22</sup> The Beslan hostage-taking crisis and massacre in September 2004 was used to justify the end of direct elections for regional heads. On Beslan, see Crisis Group Report, *Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency* op. cit., p. 17. The president's choice requires formal approval by the regional assembly, but he can dismiss that body if it fails twice to confirm. Most heads choose to resign rather than be dismissed, as have Ingushetia's Murat Zyazikov (October 2008), Karachay-Cherkessia's Boris Ebzeyev (February 2011), Stavropol Krai's Valery Gaevsky (May 2012) and Dagestan's Magomedsalom Magomedov (January 2013).

<sup>23</sup> See Section III below.

## B. *Local Government*

Local government is constitutionally independent from the formal state government system, but some state government functions can be transferred to it together with funding for and control of their implementation. Articles 130-133 of the constitution guarantee self-governance and respect of local historical and other traditions. The principles regulating this are outlined in Federal Law 131.<sup>24</sup> Municipal borders can be changed with local consent. But as Crisis Group has described, local administrations in the North Caucasus face acute land disputes, lack of clear divisions between municipal, republic and federal lands and other problems, due to a moratorium on land reform in most republics. These disputes often acquire ethnic dimensions.<sup>25</sup>

Disputes over territory and borders caused delays in local elections in Ingushetia and Chechnya in 2009. Ingushetia had claims to Prigorodny district (North Ossetia), while Chechnya wanted control over Sunzhensky and Malgobeksky districts (Ingushetia). The counter-terrorism regime in Chechnya, not lifted until that year, also delayed local polls. The opposition in Ingushetia severely criticised the elections for legitimising the de facto electoral district borders, and since 2012, the Chechen and Ingush leaderships have clashed over the demarcation of their border.

The changing legal framework and ever tighter centralisation put local governments in an unpredictable environment; demands of federal and republican ministries and state departments are often contradictory, and reporting burdens are stifling.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, local authorities that are close to their constituents can make a difference. "Local government in the region mediates a complex mosaic of actors, from authorities, community leaders and wealthy businessmen .... In some Dagestan villages, much of the infrastructure is built by residents with the support of local sponsors – from repairing schools to constructing roads", an expert said.<sup>27</sup>

However, higher level authorities increasingly control local elections. Especially in Dagestan, some local leaders have become strongmen who rule fiefdoms. Republic authorities tend to be less interested in strong, resourceful government than having dependent, loyal elites with whom they can build economic ties by providing federal funding. The resulting deterioration of local government and services breeds grievances.

## C. *Funding and budgets*

North Caucasus regions are highly dependent on central government funding, with the subsidy level ranging in 2012 from 85 per cent in Ingushetia to 56 per cent in North Ossetia and 30 per cent in Stavropol Krai. The actual dependence can be even

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<sup>24</sup> Local governments make decisions on local property; draft, approve and implement their budgets, establish local taxes and duties; ensure public order and solve other issues of local importance.

<sup>25</sup> A violent clash over land and administrative borders broke out on 21 August 2013 between Kumyks and Laks in Makhachkala's suburb, Karaman, involving up to 1,000 people. "Причиной конфликта в местности Караман (Черные камни) стал земельный вопрос" ["The cause of the conflict in Karaman ... was a land issue"], *Chernovik*, 21 August 2013. Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Irina Starodubrovskaya, "Реальные сценарии для реального федерализма" ["Real scenarios for real federalism"], *Economic policy*, 6 March 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, Irina Starodubrovskaya, director, political economy and regional development department, Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy, Moscow, June 2013.

higher due to the wide range of federally co-funded programs in a region.<sup>28</sup> In Dagestan 55 such programs were implemented in 2012, worth almost 20 billion rubles (\$606 million), in addition to the some 50 billion rubles (\$1.5 billion) of direct subsidy. The share of federal funding varies from program to program. More than 90 per cent of development programs for Ingushetia are federally funded, compared to one third in the “South of Russia” program.<sup>29</sup>

Most taxes go to the federal budget, which then distributes subsidies to the regions. Ex-President Medvedev acknowledged fiscal and budgetary over-centralisation as a problem and called for reform in his last budget address.<sup>30</sup> Centralisation is, nevertheless, combined with informal autonomy, and expenditure controls are often weak.

Management of federal subsidies – hard to predict and slow to be disbursed – is a serious challenge at local level. Planning is difficult, as governors must wait to receive funds before hiring contractors. There is little flexibility to address contingences. A district administration head in Karachay-Cherkessia complained:

People tell me: “We are paying taxes, why can’t you reconstruct the road, provide water and electricity?” The higher authorities ask me: “Why don’t you ensure water supply?” I tell them: “Give me money for the pipe!” But they say they have no money available. What do I do? I should be able to raise this money myself. The state should reverse the fiscal pyramid in favour of local authorities .... If I had greater revenue, I could have planned the construction of social housing, development of transport. People who live in a given territory should get more from the revenues produced on their soil. I am not asking for more money. I am asking to be given a fishing rod, and we will fish ourselves.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For example, in 2012 in Dagestan 70 per cent of the budget was subsidised by the centre; moreover, a significant part of the region’s “own” surplus came from taxes paid on salaries of state employees and from state-sponsored projects. Apart from budget subsidies, there are relevant targeted federal programs. Thus, Ingushetia, whose 2011 budget was 17.2 billion rubles (\$521 million) will receive 32.2 billion rubles (about \$1 billion) within the framework of “The program for socio-economic development of Ingushetia in 2010-2016”. Crisis Group interview, Mikhail Chernyshov, expert, Moscow, June 2013. “Счетная палата: уровень дотационности консолидированного бюджета Республики Дагестан остается высоким и составил в 2012 году 70,2 процента” [“The Accounts Chamber: The level of subsidy of the consolidated budget of the Republic of Dagestan remains high and amounted to 70.2 per cent in 2012”], FK-Novosti, 30 May 2013. “Из чего складывается дотационность?” [“How the subsidy is composed”], United Russia party of North Ossetia-Alania (online), 6 June 2013. “Закон Республики Ингушетия ‘Об исполнении республиканского бюджета за 2011 год’” [“Law of the Republic of Ingushetia ‘On execution of the republican budget for 2011’”], 31 December 2012. “В Минрегионе России подведены предварительные итоги реализации ФЦП ‘Социально-экономическое развитие Республики Ингушетия на 2010-2016 годы’” [“The Russian Ministry of Regional Development announced preliminary results of the Federal Target Program ...”], 14 May 2013.

<sup>29</sup> “Программа ‘Юг России (2008-2013)’” [“The program ‘South of Russia (2008-2013)’”], Federal Targeted Programs, <http://fcp.economy.gov.ru>; “Программа ‘Социально-экономическое развитие Республики Ингушетия на 2010-2016 годы’” [“The program of ‘Socio-economic development of the Republic of Ingushetia in 2010-2016’”], Federal targeted programs of Russia, 17 October 2009; “Информация об участии Республики Дагестан в реализации государственных и федеральных целевых программ в 2012 году” [“Information on the Republic of Dagestan participation in the implementation of state and federal targeted programs in 2012”], Dagestan economy ministry; “Счетная палата проверила использование средств в Республике Дагестан” [“The Accounts Chamber has checked use of funds in Dagestan”], Accounts Chamber, Russian Federation, 30 May 2013.

<sup>30</sup> “Budgetary Address for 2012-2014”, [www.kremlin.ru](http://www.kremlin.ru), 29 June 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interview, head of Nogay district, Erken-Shakhar, December 2012.

Over-regulation, very complicated reporting requirements and a huge amount of bureaucratic paperwork pose big challenges. According to Federal Law 94 and the new Federal Law 44, municipal units are supposed to put out to tender all state contracts over 100,000 rubles (\$3,000). The local executive quoted above recommended “to raise the threshold of financial freedom for local governors .... Instead of strengthening the control mechanisms, they are tying our hands. On top of this, we are drowning in bureaucratic paperwork”.<sup>32</sup> Even though “Russia has limited capacity for fiscal decentralisation, as this will lead to increased inequality between regions and among municipalities”, according to a leading expert, “a degree of decentralisation and, most importantly, simplification of reporting and less regulation is absolutely necessary”.<sup>33</sup>

Regional and local government inefficiency contributes to popular alienation and distrust, exacerbating tensions and increasing the appeal of national or Islamist opposition. To change this, regional governments should be given more fiscal autonomy, and control measures should be improved to fight corruption.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Crisis Group interview, Natalia Zubarevich, professor of economic and social geography at Moscow State University, Moscow, August 2013.



### III. Elections

On 8 September a republic head will be indirectly elected in Ingushetia and a new President put in place in Dagestan, scuttling the opportunity for chief executives to gain real legitimacy and support based on a popular vote. In March 2013 the Duma gave region-level assemblies, including the seven in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD) dominated by the ruling United Russia party, the right to suspend direct elections of chief executives, which they subsequently did.

The 2011 Duma and 2012 presidential contests held in the North Caucasus did little to increase citizens' sense of participation or authorities' accountability, because of significant electoral violations. Reported turnouts for the national contests were between 99 per cent (Chechnya) and 51 per cent (Stavropol Krai), with overwhelming majorities for United Russia and President Putin. At the same time, the federal races were accompanied by regional council and local government elections that in several instances were peaceful but highly contested. This demonstrated that communities are able and interested to protect their votes and that the need in the North Caucasus is for better elections, with less ballot stuffing and artificial increase in turnout, rather than elimination of direct suffrage.

Local leaders' ability to ensure results is critical to their political survival. In Stavropol Krai, where results were unsatisfactory for the authorities, two governors resigned.<sup>34</sup> But because their loyalty is important to the federal centre, North Caucasus elites have gained a certain bargaining power in political and economic life.

#### A. State Duma Elections 2011

Nationally, United Russia lost its constitutional majority but preserved a simple majority in the 2011 Duma elections, while the Liberal Democrats, Just Russia and Communists gained seats. In the North Caucasus republics, United Russia polled between 99.5 per cent (Chechnya) and 67.9 per cent (North Ossetia), helping to keep it close to 50 per cent nationally.<sup>35</sup>

Although all the main Russian parties are present in the region, their ideologies and programs seldom reflect local concerns. They are active almost solely during

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander Chernogorov, Stavropol's governor, served three terms and resigned when Just Russia won the 2007 regional elections, and Vladimir Gryzlov, then United Russia leader and State Duma speaker, announced that he should go. United Russia took less than 25 per cent of the vote, Just Russia 37 per cent. Stavropol Krai was the only North Caucasus region United Russia lost. Chernogorov was expelled from United Russia; his successor, Valery Gaevsky, resigned in 2012. "Грызлов: Губернатор Ставропольского края должен уйти" ["Gryzlov: Stavropol Krai governor must resign"], Rosbalt, 12 March 2007. "Губернатор Ставрополья Александр Черногоров не намерен уходить в отставку" ["Stavropol Krai governor does not intend to resign"], *Vedomosti* (online), 16 March 2007. Just Russia, a social democratic party formed in 2006, holds 64 of 450 seats in the State Duma. It declares itself an opposition party but closely cooperates with the authorities.

<sup>35</sup> United Russia (UR) received 49.3 per cent nationally, the Communists 19.2 per cent, Just Russia 13.2 per cent and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) 11.7 per cent. National turnout was 60.1 per cent but in Chechnya 99.5 per cent and in Dagestan 91 per cent, the same percentage UR received. In Kabardino-Balkaria, turnout was 98.3 per cent, with 81.9 per cent for UR. Ingushetia's turnout was 86.4 per cent, with 91 per cent for UR. North Ossetia's 85 per cent turnout, was the highest in fifteen years, with UR at 67.9 per cent. Karachay-Cherkessia turnout was 93.2 per cent, 89.8 per cent for UR. By contrast, UR averaged 30 per cent less in ten ethnic Russian regions than in 2007. Central Electoral Commission; Caucasian knot, 5-7 December 2011.

elections; party loyalty is weak, and leaders tend to drift from one to another. “The local population sees a party as a resource”, a human rights activist said. “Many join United Russia because it is a career lift, like the Communist Party was in Soviet times. Our President Kanokov started in the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia; now he is in United Russia”.<sup>36</sup>

Some parties are instrumentalised by ethnic groups. Thus, Yabloko in Kabardino-Balkaria is mostly Balkar, but in Dagestan mostly Lezgin.<sup>37</sup> The amended party law was expected to make it easier for politicians with nationalist agendas to infiltrate small parties. An ethnic Cossack party was allowed to register in January 2013 to “develop and consolidate the Russian Cossacks by strengthening their role in solving state ... and public tasks, improving cooperation with the state agencies”. The party declared its intent to contest elections in September and asked to join the Putin-led People’s Front. The communists filed a complaint with the justice ministry saying it was illegally formed on an ethnic basis.<sup>38</sup>

Election monitoring is poorly organised compared to other regions. Only participating parties, candidate and media representatives, not Russian domestic civil society groups, are allowed to observe, according to law. Yabloko in Kabardino-Balkaria was the most efficient, mainly because its activists are from the Balkar national movement. Over 150 observers registered violations, mainly in Balkar areas and the capital, Nalchik. The communists in Kabardino-Balkaria (dominated by ethnic Kabardins) observed but did not report violations. One of their observers reportedly stated that he personally dropped five bundles of ballots (100 each) into the ballot box.<sup>39</sup> Observation could be more effective if broader domestic civic participation, including by non-party organisations and groups, was allowed.

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<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group interview, Valery Khatazhukov, chair, Kabardino-Balkar Human Rights Centre, Nalchik, December 2012.

<sup>37</sup> Yabloko, one of the oldest parties in Russia, is one of the few in the non-parliament opposition that keeps North Caucasus on its agenda, making statements on the region and devoting resources to support its local branches. But even a Yabloko leader was sceptical about how much it can do: “As to North Caucasus: first, the region is complicated; it is hard to navigate in such diversity; secondly, it is dangerous; thirdly, its population is rather small. So when the party’s resources are scarce and political circumstances constraining, the cost and benefit factor favours other regions”. Crisis Group interview, Victor Kogan-Yasny, adviser to a Yabloko party leader, Gregory Yavlinsky, Moscow, 22 February 2013. Yabloko’s St Petersburg branch is active on human rights in Chechnya.

<sup>38</sup> The Program and Charter of the Russian Federation’s Cossack’s party, [www.ka-prf.ru](http://www.ka-prf.ru). “Коммунисты добиваются ликвидации Казачьей партии” [“Communists seek liquidation of Cossack party”], *Izvestiya*, 30 May 2013. At least three other Cossack parties tried to register but failed. Elena Strukova, “Партии русских националистов: регистрация в Минюсте” [“Parties of Russian nationalists: registration with the Ministry of Justice”], Sova Centre, 11 May 2012. The All-Russia People’s Front was founded in May 2011 on the president’s order to create a “broad popular front [of] like-minded political forces” to participate in the Duma elections. It includes United Russia, other parties, NGOs, the staff of professional unions and state companies, such as Russian Railways (1 million members), the postal service (over 280,000), and the Siberian Business Union (40,000). On 12 June 2013, Putin was elected its leader. Natal’ya Kostenko, “ОНФ обзавелся аппаратом и будет зарегистрирован как движение” [“ONF ... will be registered as a movement”], *Vedomosti*, 13 June 2013. “Почта России’ вступила в Народный фронт” [“Russian Post joined the People’s Front”], *Lenta.ru*, 2 August 2011. “Паровоз для Путина. Для сотрудников РЖД их вступление в ОНФ Путина стало новостью” [“Steam locomotive for Putin. The employees of the Russian Railway Roads have just learned about their joining All-Russia People’s Front”], *Gazeta.ru* (online), 18 June 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Meeting record given to Crisis Group by Yabloko members in Nalchik. Crisis Group interview, Tamara Gerieva, Yabloko activist, Nalchik, March 2012.

Crisis Group was told of a number of alleged violations that appeared aimed at increasing turnout. The chair of an electoral committee in Derbent (Dagestan) said there was “virtually no turnout whatsoever”, but the committee reported 94 per cent. An observer at poll station 1145 in Makhachkala reported that he and two colleagues counted 104 voters, while the official figure was given as 2,143. Ballot stuffing was registered at that station by an observer whom a local official allegedly attacked.<sup>40</sup> In Chechnya, a professor said she was ordered to take 25 students on a bus around Grozny’s centre, ready to pretend to be voters if independent journalists appeared. She added that two days after the elections, representatives of the local administration and the police asked her neighbours to sign electoral lists filled out for them and threatened those who refused: “Don’t you respect the will of the President? He asked you to sign”.<sup>41</sup> In Kabardino-Balkaria, Yabloko activists gave Crisis Group sixteen polling station protocols showing all parties except United Russia with no votes and turnout of almost 100 per cent.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, just one protest was held in the North Caucasus: in Dagestan, organised by the communists, supported by Yabloko. A rally planned in Kabardino-Balkaria was cancelled after the authorities changed its location at the last minute. Alleging the republic’s head had falsified results, the Ingush opposition filed a complaint with the Sharia Court, which refused to hear it. The chair of the republic’s Central Elections Committee (CEC), Musa Evloyev, who was implicated by the opposition together with the republic’s head, denied all allegations and said no one had reported violations to his body, since “there was no reason for this”.<sup>43</sup> Demonstrations took place in ethnically Russian majority parts of southern Russia: Krasnodar, Rostov-on-Don, Sochi, Stavropol, Pyatigorsk, Astrakhan and Volgograd, but the main rallies were in Moscow. In the North Caucasus, the risks of protesting and the climate of fear are much higher than elsewhere in the country, but so is community solidarity. According to an expert, “once they have overcome their fear, those who are angry tend to join the insurgency, not street protests”.<sup>44</sup>

The final report of the international election observation mission led by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) stated, “the elections were marked by the convergence of the state and the governing party” and slanted in favour of the latter, which “did not provide the necessary conditions for fair electoral competition”. Neither the election administration nor the media was impartial, and state authorities intervened at several levels.<sup>45</sup> The OSCE concurred with Crisis Group sources that the process deteriorated considerably during the count and tabulation of votes, when observers were also obstructed. Adjudication of complaints by the

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<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, observers from Makhachkala, member of electoral committee from Derbent, both in Makhachkala, December 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interviews, professor from Grozny, Grozny, August 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nazran; interview, observations, Nalchik, both December 2011.

<sup>43</sup> “Ингушская оппозиция пожаловалась на результаты выборов в шариатский суд” [“Ingush opposition appealed election results in a Sharia court”], Lenta.ru, 15 December 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interview, Natalia Zubarevich, professor of economic and social geography at Moscow State University, Moscow, August 2013.

<sup>45</sup> In 2007, when OSCE planned a big mission, the authorities used administrative hurdles and visa denials to prevent its work. This time Russia invited it to monitor the Duma elections but limited it to 40 long-term observers. “Дипломат Максим Филандров – о тексте и подтексте доклада европейских наблюдателей на выборах в Госдуму” [“The diplomat Maxim Filandrov – about the text and subtext of the report of the European observers to the Duma elections”], Radio Liberty, 6 December 2011.

CEC lacked transparency and did not offer effective and timely redress. Representatives of most parties expressed great distrust in the impartiality and independence of election committees at all levels.<sup>46</sup> The OSCE findings were consistent with many problems Crisis Group witnessed in the North Caucasus or was subsequently told of by domestic observers.

In an apparent reaction to popular dissatisfaction with the Duma elections, President Medvedev used his farewell address to the Federation Council to promise direct elections of regional leaders, increased party control over the CEC, simplification of requirements for registration of parties and presidential candidates and return to proportional representation, with 225 single-mandate constituencies. In short, he envisaged reversal of a number of the changes made by Putin during eight years of over-centralisation. But as is evident with the 2013 change regarding the election of chief executives, reforms are being rolled back, not promoted.

### *B. Presidential Elections 2012*

Putin, then prime minister, won in the first round of the 4 March presidential elections with 63.6 per cent of the national vote, but in most of the North Caucasus with 90 per cent or more. Results diverged only slightly in three NCFD regions. In North Ossetia, turnout was 81 per cent with 70.1 per cent for Putin. Kabardino-Balkaria (KBR) had a turnout of 73 per cent, with 77.6 per cent for Putin. The situation in KBR changed considerably from the Duma elections, when both the turnout and votes for the ruling party were close to 100 per cent. In Stavropol Krai, the results were closest to Russia's average, with Putin receiving 64.5 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

This time online cameras in all polling stations made ballot stuffing and similar attempts to increase voter numbers more difficult. Instead, state employees were reportedly pressured to vote. In Dagestan's Nogay district, the administration head was said to have gathered them three days in advance and given them a phone number to call and report on how they voted or risk salary cuts or dismissal. In some institutions, employees were reportedly asked to photograph their ballots, while others were required to take a collective picture before the polling station.<sup>48</sup>

Crisis Group visited eight polling stations in three Kabardino-Balkaria districts and subsequently interviewed observers and voters in five other republics. Observers reported various violations, some of which Crisis Group also witnessed, including multiple voting and "carousel voting".<sup>49</sup> A Grozny teacher said she voted over twenty times. Other public sector employees were told to visit 25 to 28 polling stations.

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<sup>46</sup> "Russian Federation. Elections to the State Duma 4 December 2011", OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, 12 January 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Second was the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov (17.2 per cent), third (7.9 per cent) the oligarch Mikhail Prokhorov, who had entered the political scene a year earlier. "На выборах президента РФ в регионах СКФО Путин получает от 64 до 99 процентов голосов избирателей" ["Putin gets from 64 to 99 per cent of votes"], *Caucasian Knot*, 5 March 2012. Putin polled 99.8 per cent in Chechnya (turnout 99.6 per cent), nearly 93 per cent in Dagestan (turnout 92.8 per cent), over 92 per cent in Ingushetia (turnout 86.4 per cent) and over 91.3 per cent in Karachay-Cherkessia (turnout 91.3 per cent). Central Electoral Commission; *Caucasian knot*, 5-6 March 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Crisis Group interviews and observations, Terekli-Mekteb, Makhachkala, Elbrus, Chegem, Baksan district, Nalchik, March 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Carousel voting is a method of vote rigging popular in elections in several states of the former Soviet Union, usually involving bussing voters, or driving them in groups of cars, from one polling station to another to cast ballots multiple times, usually using fake absentee ballots.

By noon some polling stations had run out of ballots, so residents registered in those precincts objected. The people involved in the carousels also made trouble, as they were said to fear they would be fired if they failed to vote. Each polling station gave them special slips, confirming they had voted.<sup>50</sup>

In Dagestan, members of these carousels reportedly had special indicators, sometimes ordinary paper clips, they would show to be allowed to vote without an absentee ballot.<sup>51</sup> Portable ballot boxes gave another opportunity to inflate turnout.<sup>52</sup> In some cities (Stavropol, Zheleznovodsk and Nevinnomyssk), home voters were as much as a quarter of the total. Crisis Group also saw inflated turnouts at several polling stations in KBR.<sup>53</sup>

Once again, there were very few independent observers in the North Caucasus. Communist Party observers were in some regions (Dagestan, North Ossetia, KBR and Karachay-Cherkessia), but they were mainly interested in the municipal elections. A number of activists in Dagestan, North Ossetia and KBR participated as media observers, and some were impeded.<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group witnessed the head of a police district order media observers out of several KBR polling stations. Polling station results were annulled in only one instance.<sup>55</sup>

The OSCE noted that “although all contestants were able to campaign unhindered, the conditions for the campaign were found to be skewed in favour of one candidate”, and “the then Prime Minister [Putin], was given clear advantage in the coverage. State resources were also mobilised in his support”. Similarly to Duma elections, the voting process “deteriorated during the count due to procedural irregularities”. Moreover:

Participants in campaign events reported that they had been ordered to take part by their superiors. Various levels of public institutions instructed their subordinate structures to organise and facilitate Mr. Putin’s campaign events. There was a general lack of confidence among many interlocutors in the independence of

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<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group interview, “carousel” participant, Grozny, December 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Crisis Group observations and interviews, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Chechnya, March 2012.

<sup>52</sup> It was reported that in Stavropol Krai 9 per cent of voters cast their ballots at home for the Duma elections, and 16 per cent (some 185,000) did so in March for the presidential polls. “Заставь избирком Президента выбирать...” [“Make election commission elect the President ...”], Kavpolit, 11 March 2012.

<sup>53</sup> In Kendelen village, about 300 people had voted by 9:40am, according to the election commission chair, when the Communist Party observer there had registered 30. In Tyrnyauz, the election commission chair said 497 had voted by 10am; Communist Party observers put the number at 78. Crisis Group interviews, chairwomen of election commissions and Communist Party observers, Kendelen, Tyrnyauz, March 2012.

<sup>54</sup> A human rights activist from Memorial, acting as a media observer, was detained at a polling station in Makhachkala for “threatening the chairman of the election commission to stay until the closing of the station and observe the counting of ballots”. In Nalchik an activist from Yabloko was attacked and equipment broken while filming a “carousel”. Crisis Group observations, interviews, activist observers, Kabardino-Balkaria, 4 March 2012.

<sup>55</sup> After the March 2012 presidential elections, the Central Electoral Committee annulled the results in only one North Caucasus precinct (N°1402 in Dagestan), officially due to a late vote count, but more likely because video-cameras registered ballot stuffing. In 2009, a court annulled the results in Derbent (Dagestan) after large-scale violations. “На участке в Дагестане отменили результаты выборов” [“Results of elections abolished in a Dagestan precinct”], Lenta.ru, 5 March 2012. “В дагестанском Дербенте отменены итоги выборов мэра” [“Results of mayor elections abolished in Dagestani Derbent”], Newsland, 3 December 2009.

election officials at all levels, mostly due to their perceived affiliation with local administration and the governing party.<sup>56</sup>

While they helped increase transparency, “some presidential candidates doubted that web cameras could ensure the election’s integrity, as they cannot capture all elements of the electoral process, including mobile voting and tabulation of results”.<sup>57</sup>

Nonetheless, according to numerous independent views, including Crisis Group’s, the turnout significantly exceeded that of the Duma elections, even if visibly overstated in most places. This was due to an unprecedented use of administrative resources but also to some real support for Putin from those who feared an opposition victory would mean destabilisation and economic crisis. In the North Caucasus, the opposition was portrayed as linked to Russian nationalists who used “Stop feeding the Caucasus” as a campaign slogan.

### *C. Regional and Local Elections*

Parliamentary and municipal elections are the only competitive local processes that remain in the North Caucasus. During the later races in 2012, local communities mobilised and in some instances successfully confronted authorities trying to determine outcomes. North Caucasus citizens tend to view municipal authorities as closest to them and most able to address their day-to-day problems over infrastructure, land and social services. In 2012, those who planned to seek the highest post in the republic had a vested interest in the outcomes of the local elections, as they needed support from 5 per cent to 10 per cent of all members of the local councils to become gubernatorial candidates.<sup>58</sup>

United Russia dominates the republic legislative assemblies, with between 37 of 41 seats in Chechnya and 45 of 70 in North Ossetia.<sup>59</sup> The most homogeneous parliament is Chechnya’s (two parties), the most heterogeneous Dagestan’s (five); the rest have four, as in the State Duma. Just Russia is in most cases the second biggest party, though the communists are in Stavropol Krai, Karachay-Cherkessia and Ingushetia. The Federal Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy is traditionally unpopular in the North Caucasus due to its nationalist ideology, but it won a few seats in Kabardino-Balkaria and predominantly Russian Stavropol Krai.<sup>60</sup>

The most active campaign was in North Ossetia, with seventeen parties running and 43.8 per cent turnout. It was the only North Caucasus region where United Russia won less than 50 per cent, while the almost unknown “Patriots of Russia” came second with 26.6 per cent. A popular Ossetian oppositionist, Arsen Fadzayev, twice elected to the State Duma from United Russia, joined “Patriots of Russia” in August

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<sup>56</sup> “Russian Federation Presidential Election 4 March 2012”, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, 11 May 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Regional assemblies adopt the republic constitutions and laws that do not contradict federal legislation; approve the regional budget and report on its implementation; approve socio-economic development programs, regional taxes and regulations for local elections and referendums; define administrative-territorial divisions of districts and confirm changes in regional borders; and decide impeachments of regional governors. Federal Law 184, 6 October 1999.

<sup>59</sup> It has 22 of 27 seats in Ingushetia; 52 of 72 in Kabardino-Balkaria; 50 of 71 in Karachay-Cherkessia; 62 of 90 in Dagestan; and 37 of 49 in Stavropol Krai. Central Electoral Commission.

<sup>60</sup> Just Russia was third in Ingushetia and fourth in Karachay-Cherkessia but with the same number of mandates as the communists.

2012 and made it a success, giving support to the view that in North Caucasus personalities, not party programs, matter most for voters.<sup>61</sup> “Patriots of Russia” claimed numerous violations and instances of fraud and gathered 1,000 people to protest in the centre of the republic’s capital.

Dagestan’s political elite were already preparing for the 2015 election of the republic’s head, so district- and municipal-level competition was sharp. Massive alleged electoral fraud in Huchni village (Tabasaran district) caused a protest on 27 February 2012. During local elections in three Avar-populated districts (Akhvakhsky, Untsukul’sky and Gergebil’sky), observers noted unprecedented pressure on alternative candidates; many were forced to withdraw, and pro-government candidates won with 81 per cent to 93 per cent of the votes. In some villages, residents protested and even boycotted the election: in Karata the turnout was 6.7 per cent.<sup>62</sup>

In Chechnya, United Russia had 95 per cent of the vote in all three districts that held local elections. In Karachay-Cherkessia, it won 70 per cent in Karachayevsk, where turnout was 97.5 per cent, and 74 per cent in the capital, Cherkessk.

The election of the head of the Elbrus municipality of Kabardino-Balkaria was carefully observed by at least 60 monitors. Elbrus comprises five Balkar villages at the foot of the highest peak in Europe, with one of Russia’s most famous ski resorts. It is part of the federal government’s North Caucasus tourism project and anticipates massive investment. The incumbent head, Uezeir Kurdanov, championed local community and small business (ethnically Balkar) interests; the regional authorities, (mainly ethnic Kabardins) tried to defeat him.<sup>63</sup> Crisis Group witnessed high voter turnout and mobilisation of observers on election day (4 March 2012). Residents attributed the turnout to concern for protection of local interests once the tourist project begins. “This is a turning point in our history. We need to elect a local governor who will fight for us, protect us and lead us through this process”, a ski instructor told Crisis Group. But the election was cancelled, and a confrontation almost erupted between residents and the republic’s authorities.<sup>64</sup> Kurdanov was re-elected on the rescheduled date, 14 October.

The most controversial case, with broad coverage in the Russian media, was in Lermontov, Stavropol Krai, close to Pyatigorsk, which houses the NCFD administra-

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<sup>61</sup> Fadzayev is a two-time Olympic champion in freestyle wrestling and former senior coach of the Russian national team.

<sup>62</sup> Given that the republic head was ethnic Dargin, control of Avar districts was important for his political rivals. “Избиратели селения Карата бойкотировали выборы главы Ахвахского района Дагестана”, [“Voters of Karat village boycotted elections for the head of Akhvakhsky district, Dagestan”], *Caucasian Knot*, 15 October 2012. Crisis Group interview, Magomed Akhmednabiev, Karata activist, Moscow, January 2013.

<sup>63</sup> “The authorities exerted immense pressure on the incumbent chair, Uezeir Kurdanov. They don’t want Kurdanov, because he protects the interests of the population and the region, and he wants to develop tourism in earnest”. Crisis Group interview, local resident, Elbrus, March 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Elections of the municipal head and the local council were supposed to take place the same day as the presidential elections. The district court denied registration of the candidacy of Khizir Guliev, allegedly for false signatures on his supporter lists. Other candidates, including the protégé of the regional authorities, withdrew the night before the vote. Kurdanov was the only candidate left, and the election of the municipal head was cancelled. The local council elections took place. “After nine months of counter-terrorist operation and all this pressure in the election, we became smarter. We want the authorities to understand we will not let them treat us as nobody”. Crisis Group interview, residents, Elbrus, March 2012. “Выборы в поселке Эльбрус Кабардино-Балкарии выиграл действующий глава Узеир Курданов” [“Current head, Uezeir Kurdanov, won in Elbrus village, Kabardino-Balkaria”], *Caucasian Knot*, 15 October 2012.

tion. Apparently because Pyatigorsk land prices had skyrocketed in recent years, the city authorities decided to include Lermontov in the municipality so as to be able to sell its lands. Residents and the town's head objected. Six of fifteen local assembly deputies resigned, forcing early elections on 4 March. The town electoral commission and court, both reportedly controlled by Lermontov authorities, deregistered over 30 opposition candidates, including the former Lermontov administration head, Alexander Dunayev. The ex-deputies and their supporters initiated a sit-in on 21 February that police refused to break up.

Nine of the excluded candidates and their supporters went on a hunger strike in the city hall, demanding cancellation of the election and resignation of the head of the local election committee. The crisis was resolved by the visit of Putin's chief campaigner, Stanislav Govorukhin, and presidential envoy Khloponin, who promised "the court will make the right decision". Indeed, on 2 March it rescheduled the election for June. "We are not revolutionaries and are not against Putin; we defend the honour of this city, the legitimacy and rightness of the cause and oppose the policy of the Krai administration", Dunayev said.<sup>65</sup>

The situation only calmed, however, after Stavropol Krai's governor, Valery Gaevsky, was replaced in May 2012.<sup>66</sup> United Russia and Putin's People's Front captured twelve of fifteen seats in the local council, including Dunayev's.<sup>67</sup> Khloponin announced that the Lermontov-Pyatigorsk merger would be premature. In May 2013, a criminal case was instigated against Dunayev for attempting to discredit the elections by organising a hunger strike and preventing the electoral committee's work during the 2012 campaigns.<sup>68</sup> The Lermontov dispute was widely reported in federal media and heralded by the opposition as "a small revolution in the North Caucasus".<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interview, Pyatigorsk, December 2012. The results in Lermontov for the ruling party at the Duma elections and for Putin at the presidential election were the lowest in Stavropol Krai, 26.7 per cent and 48.7 per cent (average results were 49.1 per cent and 64.5 per cent). The regional branch of United Russia decided not to nominate candidates for new municipal elections in such tense conditions, and its members ran as single-mandate candidates. Russian Federation Central Election Committee, [www.vybory.izbirkom.ru](http://www.vybory.izbirkom.ru); "Ставропольская 'Единая Россия' избавляется от старых кадров" ["Stavropol 'United Russia' is getting rid of old staff"], *Kommersant* (online), 17 May 2012. For more on the election crisis in Lermontov, see: "Когда волнуются Кавказские Минводы" ["When Kavkazskie Mineralnie Vody get agitated"], *Expert* (online) 19 March 2012.

<sup>66</sup> He apparently resigned due to United Russia's relatively poor result, though its overall Krai showing was not too bad. After Dunayev's office was torched by unidentified persons, the new governor sent several deputy chairmen of the Krai's regional authority to Lermontov to maintain control. Crisis Group interview, Aleksandr Dunayev, Pyatigorsk, December 2012. "Сакральная жертва демократии" ["Sacral victim of democracy"], *Expert* (online), 14 May 2012; "Ставропольская 'Единая Россия' избавляется от старых кадров" ["Stavropol 'United Russia' getting rid of old staff"], *Kommersant* (online), 17 May 2012; "Фобии против губернатора" ["Phobias vs. governor"], *Gazeta.ru*, 2 May 2012.

<sup>67</sup> "Лермонтовские кандидаты разбились на команды" ["Lermontov candidates divided into teams"], *Kommersant*, 2 June 2012, "Это разношерстная публика, которую трудно назвать командой" ["This mixed public can hardly be called a team"], *Kommersant*, 15 June 2012.

<sup>68</sup> "Экс-главу Лермонтова заподозрили в дискредитации выборов" [Ex-head of Lermontov city is suspected of compromising the elections"], *Kommersant*, 15 May 2013.

<sup>69</sup> "Маленькая революция" в городе Лермонтове экс-депутаты захватили мэрию и объявили голодовку (ВИДЕО) ["'Small revolution' in Lermontov: ex-deputies seized the city administration and went on hunger-strike"], *Newsru.com*, 22 February 2012. Protest leaders told Crisis Group this helped them, as the federal authorities paid attention and intervened, but that their opponents used this against them, calling them "revolutionaries who oppose Putin". Crisis Group interview, Alexander Dunayev, Pyatigorsk, December 2012.



The Elbrus and Lermontov cases suggest that local politics remain competitive, some local governments play a pivotal role in community life, and attempts to disrupt the electoral process lead to crisis and potential violence. They also show that local communities are cooperative and eager to find solutions when their voices are heard and their interests taken into consideration.

#### D. *Elections of Regional Leaders*

There were great hopes for reform and improvement of governance when a law once again requiring regional leaders to be elected came into effect on 1 June 2012. The prospect revitalised political processes in the North Caucasus, at both regional and local levels.<sup>70</sup> However, the optimism was short-lived. Ingushetia and Dagestan were planning for direct elections in September and October 2013, and their leaders first appeared committed to following through.<sup>71</sup> But their assemblies voted against them in May 2013, after the Duma amended the law to allow the regions to reject direct elections.<sup>72</sup> Each political party represented in regional or federal assemblies can now offer Russia's president three names; he is to select three, and the regional assembly is to choose one of them.

Explaining the reversal, President Putin emphasised that elections in multi-ethnic regions would increase minorities' fears and sense of disenfranchisement. It is not clear, however, how he plans to ensure minority representation. In the three republics

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<sup>70</sup> The head governor/president, as the highest executive authority of a region, signs or declines laws adopted by the regional assembly, annually reports to it on the executive's performance, under certain circumstances can dissolve the assembly, and represents the region at all levels and in external economic relations. Chief executives (same as head/governor/president) have repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction that they do not influence appointment of the local heads of federal ministries, especially security agencies. In 2012 the regional development ministry proposed to grant regional executives the right to confirm appointments and coordinate security services. Olga Allenova, "Процедура назначения руководителей силовых ведомств построена так, что глава субъекта на нее влиять не может" ["The head of the region cannot influence appointment of heads of law enforcement agencies"], *Kommersant*, 19 June 2012. "Губернаторы получают право утверждать руководителей силовых структур" ["The governors will get the right to approve the heads of security agencies"], Chechen Info, 22 April 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Dagestan's President Magomedov said he could organise the elections as well as any other Russian region. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov said there should be one law for the country, and he was strongly against being appointed if others were to be elected: "I would think that I have stolen something from somebody". He suggested that direct elections be abolished everywhere in the country. "Глава Дагестана изберется не хуже других. Не все регионы согласны вернуться от выборов к назначению" ["Head of Dagestan will be elected not worse than others. Not all regions agree to return to elections by appointment"], *Kommersant*, 24 December 2012. "Опасность выборов — в разложении общества" ["The danger of elections is in social degradation"], *Kommersant*, 22 January 2013.

<sup>72</sup> As usual, the initiative to curb regional autonomy came from "below", ie, from local political actors. Thus, on 13 December 2012 during a session of the Legislative Council in the Kremlin, the North Ossetia assembly chair suggested to President Putin to abolish direct elections and replace them by indirect elections in the legislative assemblies. He said that in the North Caucasus republics, elections were a threat to national security and the population's lives. "Глава парламента СевОсетии предложил дать ЗС право выбора губернаторов" ["The head of North Ossetia parliament proposed to give local parliaments the right to elect governors"], RIA (online), 13 December 2012. By January 2013, all seven North Caucasus heads had appealed to Putin to do away with direct elections. "Руководители республик Северного Кавказа обратились в Кремль с предложением не проводить на их территории прямое голосование" ["Heads of the North Caucasus republics addressed to Kremlin a proposal not to hold direct elections on their territory"], *Izvestia* (online), 24 January 2013.

with such ethnic issues, Dagestan, Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria, leading positions have gone for decades to the biggest ethnic groups, even when leaders were appointed.<sup>73</sup> The only full-scale crisis was in 1999 in Karachay-Cherkessia, when the Circassians and Karachay disputed whose candidate had won, and both mobilised. Moscow appointed a Karachay, representative of the largest group, as the republic president. The republic held a subsequent direct presidential election, in 2003, without any conflicts.<sup>74</sup>

In preparation for the indirect polls in Dagestan and Ingushetia on 8 September, Putin proposed three candidates to their assemblies in August, including the incumbents and two others who are not real rivals.<sup>75</sup> His choices suggest that the assembly votes will be formalities. On the same day as Putin acted, Prime Minister Medvedev provoked the outrage of the republican opposition by his remark with regard to Ingushetia: “I think elections should be everywhere ... in cases where the political culture is still a bit different, we can have a transitional period”.<sup>76</sup>

Neither political culture nor instability is a good justification for the government to go back on a major reform to increase regional democratisation. The resulting deficit of legitimacy and accountability is likely to contribute more to further destabilisation than free and fair local polls would have.<sup>77</sup> Federalism has sacrificed much of its meaning in the North Caucasus, as democratic processes have been replaced by their imitation, and regional and local governments have lost their political and fiscal autonomy. Without democratic elections, there are few mechanisms to influence government. Many residents feel discriminated against, treated as second-class citizens who are too underdeveloped to choose their leaders. While re-introduction of direct elections could fuel some inter-ethnic tensions, the risks could be minimised with additional support from the federal centre and civil society. “Returning direct

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<sup>73</sup> A consociational form of government functioned in Dagestan 1994-2006: the State Council (one representative each of fourteen ethnic groups) as higher executive and a Constitutional Council as coordinating agency. Senior posts traditionally alternate between the two largest groups, Avars and Dargins. In Kabardino-Balkaria, chief executives are traditionally Kabardin.

<sup>74</sup> In 1999, the results of the presidential election in Karachay-Cherkessia were disputed by the supporters of a Circassian leader, Stanislav Derev, and of Karachay General Vladimir Semenov. Putin resolved this by appointing Semenov. Circassians are around 12 per cent of the population, Karachays 41 per cent. After the 1999 crisis, the republic held direct regional presidential elections in 2003, with no trouble. The presidential candidates stood in inter-ethnic teams: a Karachay for president, a Circassian for government chair, a Russian as assembly chair; the ethnic factor was thus depoliticised and did not play a prominent role in the process. Sergey Markedonov, “Северокавказский фактор региональных выборов” [“North Caucasus factor of regional elections”], Politcom.ru, 28 January 2013; “Губернаторов будут назначать в семи регионах” [“Governors will be appointed in seven regions”], *Izvestia* (online), 24 January 2013.

<sup>75</sup> In Dagestan, the acting president, Ramazan Abdulatipov, the labour and social development minister, Malik Bagliev, and the Dagestani ombudswoman, Ummupazil Omarova, were suggested. In Ingushetia, the acting head, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, the chairman of the regional branch of “Just Russia”, Uruskhan Evloev, and a deputy chair of the Ingush parliament, Magomed Tatriev, were suggested. “Все свои люди, борьбы нет” [“All close people, there is no fight”], *Gazeta.ru*, 22 August 2013.

<sup>76</sup> “Путину пожаловались на ‘нетактичного’ Медведева” [“Putin received a complaint about ‘tactless’ Medvedev”], *RBC Daily*, 23 August 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Valeriy Tishkov, director of Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, and Alexey Malashenko, Carnegie Center, quoted in “Глава Дагестана изберется не хуже других. Не все регионы согласны вернуться от выборов к назначению” [“Head of Dagestan will be elected not worst of all. Not all regions agree to return to elections by appointment”], *Kommer-sant*, 24 December 2012.

elections would be an important step forward”, Russia’s leading federalism expert said, suggesting that “at the initial stage very competent moderators should support the process to encourage interest groups to negotiate and agree”.<sup>78</sup>

The loss of faith in democratic procedure and feeling of disenfranchisement particularly affects talented professionals, many of whom are leaving the region, producing a brain drain that risks further degrading the capacity of local elites to resolve existing conflicts.<sup>79</sup> Rolling back direct election of regional chief executives is likely to cause new frustrations. The rigged Duma elections made federal political parties largely irrelevant, undermining their ability to support the region’s integration with the rest of Russia. Manipulated municipal polls strangle local self-government.

Those who have taken advantage to secure political and economic resources have an interest in preserving the status quo. Many others abstain from civic participation and ignore elections. Still others look for alternative ways of self-government based on religion or customary law, while strengthening their nationalist or Islamist beliefs. While only a minority joins the insurgency, lack of legal channels for participation and rigged political processes contribute to the popularisation of alternative governance, nourish extremist movements and exacerbate the North Caucasus’s alienation from the rest of the country. Significant improvement in governance, alleviation of tensions and a reduction in local protest potential – prerequisites for sustainable conflict resolution – are unlikely without restored democratic procedures, competitive elections at all levels and decentralisation.

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<sup>78</sup> Crisis Group interview, Natalia Zubarevich, professor of economic and social geography at Moscow State University, Moscow, August 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group observations and interviews, Irina Starodubrovskaya, director, political economy and regional development department, Gaidar Institute for Economic Policy, Natalia Zubarevich, professor of economic and social geography at Moscow State University, both in Moscow, June, August 2013.

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## IV. The Mosaic of Power Relations

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Throughout the North Caucasus, power relations are based on intricate interactions between power centres formed by a mosaic of formal and informal actors and stakeholders. Some republics have a form of modern clanship in which local strongmen create regimes of almost total control based on patronage networks that penetrate all government and law enforcement. There have been reports that the frequent convergence of local political and business interests in a few instances extends to alleged criminal cooperation, including allegations that the insurgency is sometimes contracted to intimidate or do worse to foes.<sup>80</sup>

Despite some common features, the regimes in each republic differ significantly in the degree of their liberalism, system of power relations and interactions with big business and the federal centre. Ethnicity matters, especially in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Stavropol Krai, though it is only one factor among those that determine the ruling elite's composition.<sup>81</sup>

### A. Dagestan

Dagestan is the most complex of the North Caucasus republics because of its diversity and rival power centres in which local strongmen have long had a suffocating grip on local and republic government. The largest ethnic group, the Avar, is only 29 per cent of the population. Other politically or socially important groups are Dargins (17 per cent), Kumyks (15 per cent) and Lezgin (13 per cent) respectively. The appointment of a new republic president, who announced a large campaign against clans in January 2013, is an opportunity for change, but only a comprehensive anti-corruption effort will destroy the entrenched system. The clans involve ethnic and family ties but are also networks united by business and political interests, exchange of favours and protection. Chief actors have intricate relations with each other and other stakeholders based, again, on kinship, ethnicity, religious and territorial ties.

Political and economic influence stretches well beyond Dagestan's borders to include some of Russia's richest businessmen. The most powerful and competing Dagestani players have been billionaire Senator Suleyman Kerimov (ethnic Lezgin), owner of the Nafta group, and the Magomedov brothers (Magomed and Ziyudin, ethnic Avars), owners of the Summa Capital corporation.<sup>82</sup> Kerimov is considered to have been a supporter of Dagestan's former President Magomedsalom Magomedov (2010-2013) and was involved in various major projects.<sup>83</sup> In December 2012, the

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<sup>80</sup> See, for example, "Расстрельный список Амирова" ["Amirov's execution list"], *Moskovsky kom-somolets*, 6 June 2013; Vadim Dubnov, "Махачкала без Амирова и после него" ["Makhachkala without Amirov and after him"], *RIA Novosti*, 4 June 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Ethnic and national groups, each with own identities, grievances and aspirations, seek to assert interests in domestic politics. Ethnic mobilisation occurs especially in reaction to investment, border agreements and land distribution. Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup> While Kerimov is the twentieth richest man in Russia according to *Forbes*, Ziyudin Magomedov is the 124th. "Сулейман Керимов" ["Sulejman Kerimov"], *Forbes* (online); "Зияудин Магомедов" ["Ziyudin Magomedov"], *Forbes* (online).

<sup>83</sup> The projects reportedly included plans for the Caspian resort (later part of the federal tourist cluster project), privatisation of Makhachkala port and reconstruction of Makhachkala airport, as well as construction of the Caspian glass factory. "Керимов становится ближе" ["Kerimov is getting closer"], *Expert*, 24 December 2012; "Сулейман Керимов возьмёт под свой контроль махачкалинский морской порт и аэропорт" ["Suleyman Kerimov will take control over Makhach-

CEO of his Nafta-Moskva company, Oleg Lipatov, was appointed the republic's first vice premier. Kerimov supports the Lezgin national movement but also has influential allies in other ethnic groups and secured broad popular legitimacy by buying and investing heavily in the local football team and financing the Hajj and social programs.<sup>84</sup> Ziyaudin Magomedov reportedly has good contacts with the Russian vice premier, Arkady Dvorkovich, and Prime Minister Medvedev and was being courted by former President Magomedov.<sup>85</sup>

In January 2013, President Magomedov unexpectedly resigned, possibly due to inter-clan competition, and was replaced by Moscow-based Dagestani politician Ramazan Abdulatipov (ethnic Avar). Some experts allege that the Magomedov brothers (not related to President Magomedov) played a significant role, and the Kremlin sought to contain Kerimov's influence.<sup>86</sup> Others say that relations between Kerimov and President Magomedov had cooled.<sup>87</sup> Yet others assert a business deal between the Magomedov brothers and the Avar lobby in Kerimov's inner circle to also curb Dargin power and promote an Avar leader.<sup>88</sup> Regardless of the underlying cause, if the shift in political elites is followed by a change in their supporting business groups, the investment environment might be harmed.<sup>89</sup>

Allegations that the president was fired due to competition between clans, rather than performance, are supported by the 15 per cent decrease in the number of victims of the insurgency in 2012. Magomedov produced the election results the Kremlin desired and allowed few protest rallies, despite the huge potential in society. He attracted new investment, and Dagestan was included in big state-sponsored economic development projects. That he sought to implement a more nuanced counter-insurgency strategy, mixing heavy-handed security measures with increased dialogue, a more open religious policy and mechanisms for return and rehabilitation of ex-insurgents, however, may not have appealed to Moscow on the eve of the Sochi Olympics.<sup>90</sup> He also was criticised for not fighting the clan system and corruption.

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kala seaport and airport"], *Dagestan Times*, 30 March 2011; "Сулейман Керимов ждет 50 млн человек на пляжи Дагестана" ["Suleyman Kerimov expects 50 million people to the beaches of Dagestan"], *Moy Dagestan*, 27 May 2011.

<sup>84</sup> The Anzhi football team quickly rose to the top of the Russian premier league after Kerimov bought it and increased the sport's popularity among Dagestan youth. However, in August 2013 Kerimov announced significant reduction of funding for it. Kerimov also sponsors the Hajj for up to a third of Dagestan's pilgrims. "Вот и сказке конец" ["Here's the end of the fairy tale"], *Gazeta.ru*, 7 August 2013. "Сулейман Керимов затеял большой политический бизнес на малой родине" ["Suleyman Kerimov is starting big political business in his small motherland"], *Kavkazskaya politika*, 1 February 2013; "Рискованный обмен" ["Risky exchange"], *Expert* (online), 11 February 2013; Milrad Fatullaev, "Дагестан без Сулеймана Керимова. Что потеряют дагестанцы в случае ухода олигарха?" ["Dagestan without Suleyman Kerimov. What will Dagestanis lose if the oligarch leaves?"], *Kavkazskaya politika*, 15 February 2013.

<sup>85</sup> "ТЭК заискрил" ["Fuel & Energy Complex sparks"], *Expert*, 25 February 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Magomedov was appointed the deputy head of Putin's administration. "Бизнес-джигитовка: как участники списка Forbes воюют за Дагестан" ["Business trick riding: how members of the Forbes list fight for Dagestan"], *Forbes*, 3 June 2013.

<sup>87</sup> "Рискованный обмен" ["Risky exchange"], *Expert* (online), 11 February 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Crisis Group interview, local expert close to President Magomedov, Moscow, March 2013.

<sup>89</sup> "Порт рано приватизировать ..." ["It's too early to privatise the sea port ..."], *Chernovik*, 12 July 2013; and Milrad Fatullaev, op. cit.

<sup>90</sup> For more on the contrasting counter-insurgency models applied in Chechnya and Dagestan, see Crisis Group Report, *Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, op. cit., pp. 30-33.

Magomedov's replacement was apparently prepared by channeling popular dissatisfaction through a Congress of the "Peoples of Dagestan" in Moscow on 26 October 2012. The organisers were clearly Dagestan strongmen, but delegates were activists and public leaders who came to articulate the republic's numerous problems.<sup>91</sup> They demanded resignation of its president, government and assembly but did not expressly criticise federal authorities. Participants were seriously harassed on the way to and from the event.<sup>92</sup>

Abdulatipov, the new (acting) president, immediately took steps to dismantle corrupt power networks, firing numerous officials. Only five cabinet members kept their posts, while eight heads of district administrations were removed. By the end of June, 64 per cent of the government staff was new, he said.<sup>93</sup> Abdulatipov insisted on reviewing the budget, to limit dependence on federal funds.<sup>94</sup> He launched a campaign for more efficient local government, increased revenue-raising capacity and reduced staff.<sup>95</sup> On 22 July, he dismissed the government, claiming its "work ... is inefficient. Orders of the head of the republic have not been completed". First Deputy Prime Minister Karibov was appointed acting head of the cabinet.<sup>96</sup>

The most impressive move against Dagestan's strongmen occurred on 1 June, when Said Amirov, mayor since 1998 of the republic capital, Makhachkala, was arrested for suspected involvement in the December 2011 murder of Arsen Gadzhibekov, an

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<sup>91</sup> The Congress of Peoples of Dagestan was organised in a Moscow hotel under the slogan "to prevent war in Dagestan", with some 300 individuals from different parts of the republic and diaspora. "We would like to attract the attention of the federal authorities to the critical situation in the republic today. In the last 1.5 years, the number of troops in the republic has significantly grown; army units are now involved in the security operations. The actions of the republic interior ministry personnel increasingly violate the Criminal Code. The tensions in the society are growing", said the Congress' press release. "Внеочередной съезд народов Дагестана открывается в Москве" ["Extraordinary Congress of the Peoples of Dagestan opens in Moscow"], *Caucasian Knot*, 26 October 2012. <sup>92</sup> "Проблема Дагестана в том, что здесь все продается ..." ["The problem of Dagestan is that everything is on sale here ..."], *Gazeta-NV* (online), 16 August 2012. On the way to Moscow, a bus with delegates was stopped, another was shot at, and activists were later detained and interrogated. The event was initiated by the public fund "Our Dagestan", part of Vladimir Putin's People's Front, and sponsored by Moscow-based businessman and leader of Just Russia in Dagestan, Gadzhimurad Omarov. Another organiser was Amuchi Amutdinov, a leader of the Lak national movement and ex-head of the State Pension Fund in Dagestan, whom President Magomedov dismissed in 2010. A third was Abusuryan Karkharov, a former director of Makhachkala port likewise ousted by Magomedov in 2010. "В Дагестане уволен с должности руководитель Махачкалинского порта" [The director of Makhachkala sea port is dismissed in Dagestan], *Caucasian Knot*, 7 May 2010; "Рискованный обмен" ["Risky exchange"], *Expert* (online), 11 February 2013. Crisis Group observations, interviews, Congress organisers, Moscow, October 2012.

<sup>93</sup> "Кадровая политика: Первые шаги" ["Cadre policy: first steps"], RIA Dagestan, Infographics, June 2013. Ramazan Abdulatipov's interview, "Pozner", The First channel, 24 June 2013.

<sup>94</sup> "Рамазан Абдулатипов: Ваше равнодушие оборачивается равнодушием к вам" ["Your indifference becomes indifference to yourselves"], website of Dagestan president, 13 July 2013; "ВРИО Главы Дагестана Абдулатипов: Хватит кормиться с рук рязанского мужика" ["Acting head of Dagestan, Abdulatipov: enough eating from the hands of a Ryazan peasant"], TV Rain (Dozhd), 20 June 2013.

<sup>95</sup> "Р. Абдулатипов: 'От уровня эффективности решения вопроса с увеличением налоговой базы будет зависеть оценка уровня эффективности работы глав муниципалитетов республики'" ["Effectiveness of municipal governors will be evaluated by the effectiveness of increasing tax revenues"], website of Dagestan president, 6 June 2013.

<sup>96</sup> "There is no surprise in resignation of Dagestan government", *Vestnik Kavkaza*, 22 July 2013.

investigator – charges which he denies.<sup>97</sup> Amirov's nephew, the deputy mayor of Kaspiysk, and ten alleged accomplices were also detained. The alleged leader of the Makhachkala insurgency, Sirazhudin Guchuchaliyev, was captured shortly before the arrests and reportedly provided evidence of the mayor's links with it. However, the insurgent leader's lawyer insisted that even under torture he gave no evidence against Amirov.<sup>98</sup>

Amirov was probably the most influential and notorious strongman in Dagestan. He ran Makhachkala as his fiefdom, with his own guard and people in key posts in the police, judiciary and administration. It became a city of almost one million and gained spectacular economic resources due to a construction boom, skyrocketing land prices, substantial federal funds for reconstruction, infrastructure, transport, housing, courts and administrative services. But even a short visit revealed acute problems, including dirty streets, dilapidated buildings, inadequate utilities, hectic construction, lack of planning and poorly organised public transport. Allegations concerning his unlimited appetites and businesses, as well as the contract killings of opponents and insurgency links circulated for years.<sup>99</sup> Reportedly there were fifteen attempts on his life, one leaving him in a wheelchair, but he had strong support among powerful people in Moscow and seemed politically untouchable. He led the city's branch of United Russia, had republican presidential ambitions and poor relations with all past Dagestan presidents.<sup>100</sup>

It was evident that efforts to weaken Amirov were being made for months. In March-April, federal security services carried out an extensive operation against the notorious Gimry insurgency group, the leader of which, Ibrahim Gadzhidadaev, was popularly believed to be close to the mayor. Then, the director of a company thought to be close to him was arrested in Moscow for money laundering.<sup>101</sup> On 20 May, a double terrorist attack was carried out at the city bailiffs' office, headed by his son, Dalgat. Though committed by a female suicide-bomber, experts, security services

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<sup>97</sup> The federal security services operation was prepared in deep secrecy. When Acting President Abdulatipov and thousands of Dagestan fans were watching the Russian football championship final between Dagestani Anzhi and TsSK in Grozny, access to the mayor's house and office was blocked, and he was arrested and taken away by helicopter to Rostov, then Moscow.

<sup>98</sup> "Мэр города Махачкалы Саид Амиров задержан спецназом ФСБ" ["A city mayor of Makhachkala, Said Amirov, detained by the FSB Special Forces"], Lifenews, 1 June 2013. Crisis Group interview, Konstantin Mudunov, Makhachkala, July 2013.

<sup>99</sup> Crisis Group observations and interviews, Makhachkala residents; also "Саид Амиров: 'кровавый Рузвельт'" ["Said Amirov: 'The Bloody Roosevelt'"], *Snob*, 1 June 2013; Nikolay Silayev, "Кто здесь власть?" ["Who is the authority here?"], *Expert*, 10 June 2013; Alexandr Makarkin, "Разгром клана Амирова" ["Defeat of Amirov's clan"], Politcom.ru, 3 June 2013. "Момент истины" ["The moment of truth"], 5th TV channel, 10 June 2013. Video available at [http://moment-istini.ru/program\\_archiv/archive2013/?vid=416&start=2](http://moment-istini.ru/program_archiv/archive2013/?vid=416&start=2).

<sup>100</sup> Amirov received numerous state decorations, including the best mayor of Russia award by the regional development ministry in 2013. "Минрегион: Саид Амиров – лучший мэр России" ["Ministry of regional development: Said Amirov is the best mayor in Russia"], Makhachkala city administration website, 24 April 2013; "Дагестанское дело набирает обороты – Воскресное время" ["Dagestani case is gaining strength – Sunday news"], Youtube.com, 9 June 2013; "Кремль вернулся в Дагестан ради Олимпиады" ["Kremlin came back to Dagestan for the Olympic games"], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 June 2013; "Он не наш мэр, он – главарь банды" ["He is not our mayor – he is a gang leader"], *Izvestia* (online), 4 June 2013; "Кому полезен Дагестан без выборов?" ["Who needs Dagestan without elections?"], Rukavkaz.ru, 29 April 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Irina Gordienko, "Москва зачищает Дагестан?" ["Is Moscow cleansing Dagestan?"], *Novaya Gazeta*, 1 June 2013.

and even authorities linked it to clan wars and an Amirov rival.<sup>102</sup> Abdulatipov said, “the terrorist acts in Makhachkala are a result of, among other things, corruption inside local authorities, which has been accumulated for a long time ... [but] nobody will be able to interrupt or intimidate us”.<sup>103</sup> The consequences of Amirov’s arrest will certainly be serious. Residents have reacted positively, and Abdulatipov will benefit. But it may cause instability, as networks and rules of the game shift.

The Russian government should continue to go after criminal activities of clans. Failure to fully reform the system would likely result in redistribution of Amirov’s assets and influence without real change in governance. Other ethnic groups fear that this might strengthen the Avar clans now that Amirov’s and the Magomedovs’ Dargin clans have been reduced. All ethnic clans should be more effectively circumscribed, to keep tensions down, and the ethnic balance should be preserved; it is positive that a Dargin has been appointed acting mayor. Amirov’s influence stretched far beyond Makhachkala, however, and it is not known how those contacts will be affected.<sup>104</sup> Dagestan’s vibrant civil society and community leaders should be brought in to discuss how to radically improve governance.

Security services, politically supported by Abdulatipov have also launched a heavy-handed counter-insurgency effort, ending his predecessor’s more inclusive, dialogue-focused approach. The commission for rehabilitation of fighters that was just beginning to gain trust among those who wished to surrender was replaced by a commission with a broader mandate and unclear procedure. Salafi civic initiatives, including madrasas, kindergartens and sports clubs, were closed. Intimidation resumed against Salafi religious leaders, and several left the republic. Several settlements saw mass arrests and repression against insurgents’ relatives that apparently has helped incite more radical youths to join the insurgency. Some 129 people were killed or injured in Dagestan in May alone compared to 35 in April and 41 in March.<sup>105</sup> To avoid more

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid; “Махачкалинский удар. Взрывы в Дагестане: версии” [“Makhachkala blow. Blasts in Dagestan: versions”], *Rusky reporter*, 20 May 2013. Crisis Group interviews, experts, Dagestan residents, June 2013.

<sup>103</sup> “Врио президента Дагестана связывает теракты в республике с коррупцией” [“Acting President of Dagestan links terrorist attacks in the republic to corruption”], Interfax, 26 May 2013; “Максим Шевченко: в Дагестане проще убить человека, чем объясниться с ним” [“Maxim Shevchenko: it’s easier to kill a person in Dagestan than to sort things out with him”], TVrain.ru, 20 May 2013.

<sup>104</sup> “Константин Казенин: Каким будет Дагестан без Амирова?” [“Konstantin Kazenin: what will Dagestan be like without Amirov?”], Regnum (news agency), 1 June 2013.

<sup>105</sup> “Yekaterina Sokiryanskaya: ‘Wrecking of Dagestan clans has begun’”, interview in *Vestnik Kavkaz*, 19 July 2013. Crisis Group interview and observations, Dagestan, July 2013. The number of killed and injured fell back to 43 in June. Two houses were blown up in Novosaitli village (Dagestan) on 7 March; up to ten houses in Gimry during the counter-terrorist operation on 11-21 April; and three houses in Buynaksk on 6 May. “Хайбулаев: в Новосаитли в Дагестане задержаны шесть человек” [“Khaybulayev: six people detained in Novosaitli, Dagestan”], *Caucasian Knot*, 7 March 2013; “Хозяева взорванных в Буйнакске домов пожаловались в прокуратуру на действия силовиков” [“The owners of houses blown-up in Buynaksk complain of law enforcement activity to the prosecutor’s office”], *Caucasian Knot*, 15 May 2013; “Гимры после спецоперации (Дагестан)” [“Gimry after special operation (Dagestan)”], 10 May 2013, video at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVNwFsOBobQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xVNwFsOBobQ). The replacement commission is divided into sub-commissions, only one of which deals with rehabilitation of fighters. Abdulatipov has emphasised that its work and the names of surrendering fighters will not be publicised for security reasons. It is unclear why the chair of the parliamentary commission for budget, finances and taxes was appointed to lead the sub-commission for rehabilitation of fighters. “Р. Абдулатипов: ‘Мы, дагестанцы, должны



deterioration, Abdulatipov should better balance security measures and dialogue with peaceful Salafis, end persecution of fundamentalist Muslims and relatives of insurgents and reinforce efforts to support their social and economic integration.

## B. *Ingushetia*

Unlike Dagestan, Ingushetia has no strong business groups, and its secular opposition has played a real role in political life. Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, the republic's head since 2008, significantly improved security, consolidated power and initially won some popular trust, though dissatisfaction with corruption and nepotism appears to be growing in the past year. The republic is not immune to political violence, and Yevkurov has been hard on the opposition. He resigned on 4 July, apparently to stand in the September indirect election, but remains acting head.

In 2007, as a full-fledged armed conflict between the state and the Islamic-inspired insurgency appeared imminent, the opposition helped oust former President Murat Zyazikov. The movement was led by Maksharip Aushev, a businessman and relative of the popular first president, Ruslan Aushev. He organised the initial protest rally in Nazran that September, after the security services abducted his son and nephew. They were released in Chechnya, when it became apparent that Ruslan Aushev would join the protest, and it could attract massive support. Subsequently Maksharip Aushev teamed with Magomed Yevloev, a former prosecutor who owned the independent media outlet *Ingushetia.ru*, and organised mass rallies that continued until Zyazikov's removal in October 2008. Yevloev had been murdered several months before this, and Maksharip Aushev was killed by still unidentified persons in October 2009.<sup>106</sup>

Ruslan Aushev is one of the few figures who enjoys great regional legitimacy and can challenge any Ingush leader, especially non-elected ones.<sup>107</sup> Though he apparently is without political ambition, he often appears at critical moments.<sup>108</sup> In early 2013, the opposition collected signatures for him to stand in the expected direct election of the republic's head. On 17 April, with over 50,000 signatures on the appeal,

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объединиться и очистить республику” [“R. Abdulatipov: ‘We, the Dagestanis, should unite and cleanse the republic’”], official website of the president of Dagestan, 14 April 2013; “Ситуация в зоне конфликта на Северном Кавказе: оценка правозащитников. Весна 2013 г” [“Situation in the conflict area in the North Caucasus: human rights defenders' estimate. Spring 2013”], *Caucasian knot*, 17 July 2013. Decree of the president of Dagestan №140; “О Комиссии при Президенте Республики Дагестан по примирению и согласию” [“On Dagestan presidential Commission for reconciliation and consent”], 29 April 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Yevloev was shot dead in a police car (and his body left at the republic hospital) after being detained on the order of the Ingush interior minister as he arrived by plane from Moscow with President Zyazikov. “Евлоев, Магомед” [“Evloyev, Magomed”], *Lenta.ru* (online).

<sup>107</sup> Born in 1954 in Kazakhstan, Aushev was a child of the generation of Chechen, Ingush and other North Caucasus peoples who were deported en masse from their homes by Stalin in 1944. One of the Soviet army's youngest generals, Aushev received the highest award for bravery in Afghanistan. During the 1994-1996 Chechen war, he was one of the few prominent public figures able to maintain contacts with both sides – the Chechen rebel commander, Aslan Maskhadov, like him, was a former Soviet officer, born in exile.

<sup>108</sup> When Yevkurov was injured in a terrorist act in 2009 and in a coma, the Chechen head, Ramzan Kadyrov, made statements threatening Ingushetia's sovereignty; the Ingush opposition appealed to Ruslan Aushev, who offered to replace Yevkurov until he recovered. In September 2004, Aushev was the only leader who entered the Beslan middle school when it was occupied by terrorists; he negotiated the release of 26 babies and their mothers. Sergey Mashkin, Musa Muradov, “Месть пуста не бывает. В Ингушетии началась борьба за власть” [“Revenge can't be empty. Struggle for power started in Ingushetia”], *Kommersant*, 25 June 2009.

he announced he would be a candidate. But on 8 May, the assembly voted against direct elections. Yevkurov argued that indirect election via the assembly “absolutely does not differ from democracy” and promised to use the money saved to build kindergartens and other social infrastructure.<sup>109</sup>

The opposition once led by Maksharip Aushev and Yevloev lives on in Mekhk-Khel (literally, Council of Land), created in 2008 as a political movement claiming to include representatives of all the largest *teips* (historical clans).<sup>110</sup> It is nationalist and focused on traditional values, especially Ingush claims on the Prigorodny district.<sup>111</sup> Dormant after Yevkurov replaced Zyazikov, when some members joined the new administration, it was resurrected in August 2010.<sup>112</sup> While it organised several conferences in Ingushetia and Moscow in 2012 and has lobbied for the direct election of the republic’s head, local authorities hamper its efforts to hold sanctioned protests against corruption and excessive use of force by police.<sup>113</sup> On 29 October 2012, the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Ingush-Ossetian conflict, in which conflicting claims to Ossetia’s Prigorodny district resulted in hundreds of deaths and displacement of 30,000-60,000 – activists announced a hunger strike, and demanded the government’s resignation and return of the Prigorodny district. Police broke up the strike quickly and violently.<sup>114</sup>

The Mekhk-Khel co-chair, Sultan-Girey Khashagulgov, an ex-deputy construction minister, was killed by security services in his house on 13 February 2013. The night before he had told a French radio station “they [authorities] plan to kill me” and said he had a financial conflict with Yevkurov for which his family was being prosecuted.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “Юнус-Бек Евкуров - в эфире радио ‘КП’: ‘Прямые выборы мы отменили. Строим детсады и парашютную вышку’” [“Yunus-Bek Yevkurov – on KP radio: ‘We abolished direct elections. We construct kindergartens and a parachute tower’”], *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (online), 30 May 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Mekhk-Khel claims ties to the legislative and executive body of the same name that existed before colonisation and until Stalinist exile. For more, see Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

<sup>111</sup> Musa Muradov, “У Юнус-Бека Евкурова появилась тейп-оппозиция. Главе Ингушетии предлагают распустить парламент” [“Yunus-Bek Yevkurov has a *teip*-opposition. The head of Ingushetia is suggested to dissolve the parliament”], *Kommersant*, 26 August 2010. Crisis Group Europe Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 17-19.

<sup>112</sup> A member of the group’s leadership explained, “Mekhk-Khel was created when the republic head announced that Prigorodny district is an inseparable part of Ossetia. We are an alternative to the parliament. We have no political ambitions and do not want to take power. Our main goal is to combat summary executions and abductions by security services and corruption”. Crisis Group interview, Idris Abadiey, Nazran, August 2012.

<sup>113</sup> It held a protest in front of the State Duma in Moscow in May 2012; according to one of its leaders, upon return to Ingushetia all members of its supreme council were interrogated by the interior ministry. Crisis Group interview, Murat Kotikov, supreme council member, Nazran, August 2012. “We didn’t want to do demos without official permission; they would use force against people, and we would feel responsible. Unofficially they threatened us, said they would blow us up if we did. They are afraid of rallies, because this is what the Kremlin would notice. When people quietly send thousands of letters, no one pays attention”. Crisis Group interview, Idris Abadiey, co-chair of Mekhk-Khel, August 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Special forces arrived reportedly after receiving unconfirmed information about a bomb. Five organisers were detained for fifteen days. Media release, republic internal affairs ministry, 30 October 2012. “Ингушетия: коллективная голодовка закончилась избиением и задержанием участников” [“Ingushetia: Collective hunger-strike ended with beating and detention of participants”], Memorial, 31 October 2012.

<sup>115</sup> “Внимание! Интервью Султан-Гирея Хашагульгова ‘Радио Франции’, которое он дал вечером накануне своего убийства: ‘Меня хотят убить!’” [“Attention! ‘Radio France’ interview of Sul-

Only a few Ingush businessmen play a significant public role, most notably Senator Akhmed Palankoev. In 2012, his company, “Akropol”, became the anchor investor for the Ingush ski resort “Armki”, opened in February 2013 as part of the North Caucasus tourist cluster.

There have been claims that politics and the insurgency mix. An Ingush militant, Ibragim Torzhkhoyev, alleged in an interview on federal TV on 29 March 2013 that the chair of the Ingush government, Musa Chiliev, paid \$1 million monthly as “jihad money” to the insurgents. Chiliev, as well as Yevkurov, denied the allegations.<sup>116</sup>

Ingushetia has a strong civil society, including several independent NGOs and influential intellectuals.<sup>117</sup> “Mashr” is a rare NGO set up by the brothers of abducted people (usually in the North Caucasus these are female associations) to document and act on human rights violations, including arrests, abductions and torture. Their members have been repeatedly subjected to illegal arrests, beatings, threats and intimidation.<sup>118</sup> NGO leaders are active in government commissions, such as that for rehabilitation of fighters. The public commission for overseeing prisons (ONK) is the strongest and most independent of its kind in the North Caucasus. The leading Russian human rights group, Memorial, has had an office in the republic since 2000.

### C. *Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria*

Political life in the western republics of the North Caucasus is likewise shaped by several strong figures and their allied business groups. Karachay-Cherkessia’s strongest clan is that of Mustafa Batdyev (ethnic Karachay), who ruled the republic from 2003 to 2008. With his son-in-law, Ali Kaitov, director of one of its most successful enterprises, Kavkazcement, he built a strong network of allies. It took the killing of seven people (friends of his business competitor) in Ali Kaitov’s house, months of mass protests and storming of the government and presidential administration building twice by relatives of the victims before troops were brought into the republic, and the entire government was dismissed in 2004. However, President Batdyev was able to distance himself from this incident and retain power for four more years.<sup>119</sup> The republic has five ethnic groups, but clan links are also a key to political

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tan-Girey Khashagulgov the evening before he was killed: “They plan to kill me”], <http://mehkkel.org>, 13 February 2013. According to official sources, Khashagulgov shot at the FSB, but there were no witnesses, as security had previously taken the family out of the house. In March 2011, he had been severely injured during an attempt on his life. “Ранее, силовые структуры уже несколько раз пытались ‘по-тихому’ ликвидировать Султан-Гирея Хашагульгова” [“The authorities tried to liquidate Sultan-Girey Khashagulgov ‘quietly’ several times”], [Angusht.com](http://Angusht.com), 13 February 2013. One brother, Issa, is under investigation for organising a terrorist act at the Vladikavkaz market in 2010 and has reportedly been tortured. The second brother, Yakub, and three other members of the extended family were arrested on the same charges. Security services have reportedly been interested in Issa since 2004. “Khamatkhanov, Khashagulgov”, Memorial, 8 February 2007; “Убит в другом измерении” [“Killed in a different dimension”], *Novaya Gazeta* (online), 18 February 2013. <sup>116</sup> Zhanna Ul’yanova, “Ингушетия перед провокационным выбором” [“Ingushetia faces provocative choice”], [Gazeta.ru](http://Gazeta.ru), 2 April 2013.

<sup>117</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit. Civil society groups include Western-style human rights NGOs and humanitarian organisations whose capacities matured as they responded to the Chechen and Ingush-Ossetian conflicts.

<sup>118</sup> Crisis Group interview, Magomed Mutsolgov, “Mashr” chair, Karabulak, December 2012.

<sup>119</sup> All those killed were friends of Kaitov’s business competitor, Rasul Bogatyrev, a republic legislator and shareholder in Kavkaztsement. Kaitov was sentenced to seventeen years in prison. “Отцы и зяти” [“Fathers and sons-in-law”], *Kommersant*, 1 November 2004.

influence.<sup>120</sup> Batdyev's successor, Boris Ebzeev, a former Constitutional Court judge (ethnic Karachay), was unable to balance these interests and was replaced in 2011 by Rashid Temrezov, a Batdyev ally.<sup>121</sup>

The main challengers to the ruling Karachay elites have traditionally been Circassian activists. The Derevs are the strongest family (Vyacheslav Derev is a senator). They run successful businesses independent of the local authorities and, as supporters of the Circassian cause, are popular and respected.<sup>122</sup> Other influential Circassian families are the Arashukovs, Khapsirokovs and Eskindarovs but they lack independent economic resources. The three families compete with each other.<sup>123</sup> Part of the Karachay elite is becoming more supportive of Temrezov, and Khloponin, the North Caucasus envoy, reportedly encouraged him recently to distance himself from the Badtyev-Kaitov clan.<sup>124</sup>

In Kabardino-Balkaria, two Kabardin groups – around the republic's head, Arsen Kanokov, and the family of now deceased former President Valery Kokov, who ruled from 1992 to 2005 – compete for leadership. Kanokov is one of Russia's richest businessmen.<sup>125</sup> A Kokov brother, internal affairs ministry General Yury Kokov, who until recently directed in Moscow the Centre for Combat against Extremism, is thought to have republic presidential ambitions. He allegedly ordered the arrests for corruption of three senior members of Kanokov's inner circle in June 2012. The case was reportedly prepared by a close ally, Sergey Vasil'ev, the republic's internal affairs minister, while Kokov personally kept the federal minister informed.<sup>126</sup> In January 2013, independent experts confirmed the state-owned building in question (the philharmony) was in poor condition and had a very limited value. On completion of the investigation three months later, however, the suspects were charged with exceeding

<sup>120</sup> Karachay-Cherkessia is approximately 40.7 per cent Karachay, 31.4 per cent Russian, 11.8 per cent Circassian, 7.7 per cent Abazin and 3.3 per cent Nogay. All-Russian population census, 2010. Batdyev significantly depoliticised the nationality issue by encouraging creation of two additional ethnic districts (regions) – Abazinsky and Nogaysky – in 2006 and 2007.

<sup>121</sup> “Все идет по клану” [“Everything is going to clans”], *Kommersant Ogonyok*, 7 March 2011, “Президент и кланы. В Карачаево-Черкессии меняется власть” [“President and clans. Authority changes in Karachay-Cherkessia”], *Voice of America* (online), 26 February 2011; Konstantin Kazenin, Murat Gukemukhov, “Народное собрание Карачаево-Черкессии: политические и лоббистские группы” [“People's Assembly of Karachay-Cherkessia: political and lobby groups”], *Regnum*, 7 July 2009.

<sup>122</sup> The businesses are “Merkury”, a mineral water production company, and “Merkury-2”, an automobile assembly plant.

<sup>123</sup> For detailed analysis of informal political-economic groups, see Konstantin Kazenin, Murat Gukemukhov, “Народное собрание Карачаево-Черкессии: политические и лоббистские группы” [“People's Assembly of Karachay-Cherkessia: political and lobby groups”], *Regnum*, 7 July 2009.

<sup>124</sup> Crisis Group phone interview, Murat Gukemukhov, Karachay-Cherkessia journalist, June 2013. “Джемаль: кадровые перестановки в МВД Карачаево-Черкессии не связаны с делом об убийстве Тебуева” [Dzhemal: staff reshuffle in Karachay-Cherkessia MIA not related to the Tabuyev murder], *Caucasian Knot*, 3 June 2013.

<sup>125</sup> 160th richest in Russia in 2012. “Арсен Канокков” [“Arsen Kanokov”], *Forbes* (online). His clan includes the related Zhamborov and Tlekhugov families.

<sup>126</sup> “Главный по экстремизму преподает урок” [“The chief for extremism will give a lesson”], *Gazeta.ru*, 25 July 2007. The head of Kanokov's administration, Vladimir Zhamborov, Minister of State Property Khandulsalam Ligidov and his sister-in-law, Madina Khatsukova, were arrested, transferred to Moscow and accused of large-scale fraud in the transfer of the Philharmony building in Nalchik to a private person, Madina Khatsukova. The case had strong resonance in the republic, since it was thought to be politically motivated.

their authority, and in May a further criminal case (fraud and abuse of authority) was instigated against former government chair Ivan Gerter, a Kanokov ally.<sup>127</sup>

Kabardino-Balkaria has several independent NGOs, the most effective of which are the Human Rights Centre and the Mothers for Civil and Human Rights, an organisation for mothers of combatants and people suspected of participating in the insurgency, as well as strong ethnic NGOs representing the national movements. Karachay-Cherkessia lacks significant human rights NGOs but does have active ethnic ones. Both republics have small, active Salafi groups.<sup>128</sup>

#### D. *Chechnya and North Ossetia*

The most homogeneous landscape is in Chechnya, ruled in an authoritarian manner by 37-year-old Ramzan Kadyrov. He has concentrated great power and economic resources in his hands, suppressed, eliminated or incorporated alternative power centres and opposition and created an elite based on strong ties with his trusted people that forms a vast patronage network. This group dominates Grozny, once a city with a strong multi-ethnic urban culture, now one dominated by rural conservatives with resources, power and impunity.

Kadyrov's ideology is a mix of nationalism, Islamism and loyalty to President Putin. He positions himself as an almost religious authority, enforces Sufi Islam, encourages polygamy and carries out charity projects beyond Chechnya.<sup>129</sup> He advocates conservative attitudes and enforces Islamic dress for women: Crisis Group analysts were denied access to the university due to "insufficiently long sleeves and lack of headscarves".<sup>130</sup> Numerous media outlets and propaganda resources foster a personality cult. Streets are awash with slogans praising Kadyrov; huge portraits of him, his father and Putin are on every other building, in shops and at the entrance to villages; and literary works and songs are dedicated to him.<sup>131</sup> Most importantly, he can enforce his will due to a climate of fear. He enjoys Putin's strong support and is the only republic head who controls the security services on its territory, personally supervises

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<sup>127</sup> "Дело чиновников Кабардино-Балкарии приводят в аварийное состояние" ["The case of Kabardino-Balkaria's officials is brought to an emergency condition"], *Kommersant*, 30 January 2013; "Завершено дело о продаже здания филармонии в Кабардино-Балкарии" ["The sale of the Philharmony building is completed"], *Pasmi.ru*, 22 April 2013; "Еще одно дело возбуждено против экс-главы правительства КБР Гертера" ["Another case has been instigated against former chair of KBR government, Gerter"], *RIA Novosti*, 7 May 2013.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, op. cit., pp. 5-8.

<sup>129</sup> "В Грозном открыт новый мост" ["A new bridge opened in Grozny"], *Grozny Inform*, 16 June 2013; "В Чечне отметили День России – 12.06.2013 (видео)" ["Chechnya celebrated Russia's Day – 12.06.2013 (video)"], *Мой Grozny*, 13 June 2013; Igor Svinarenko, "Эффективный менеджер с кавказским менталитетом" ["An effective manager with Caucasian mentality"], *Moscow News*, 15 June 2013. Crisis Group observations, Grozny, August 2012.

<sup>130</sup> The guard at the entrance explained there were no written instructions regarding this rule, but it was "the president's order", and everyone had to obey. Crisis Group observation, Grozny, July 2013.

<sup>131</sup> In May 2013, after a big press tour of editors-in-chief of leading Russian newspapers who asked several questions about his many portraits, Kadyrov promised to remove them. In less than 48 hours, most were gone; the portraits of Putin and Kadyrov senior remain. "На улицах городов и сел Чечни резко сократилось число портретов Рамзана Кадырова, сообщают местные жители" ["The number of Ramzan Kadyrov's portraits in the streets of Chechen towns and villages is significantly reduced, according to local residents"], *Caucasian Knot*, 12 June 2013. Crisis Group observations, Grozny, July 2013.

anti-terrorist operations and enjoys autonomy to pursue an almost independent state-building project.

Kadyrov offers substantial loyalty in return. In June 2013, 115,000 people were brought to the centre of Grozny to celebrate Russia Day, sing the national anthem and carry banners with his and Putin's portraits; 6,000 children in blue, red and white formed a live tricolour flag.<sup>132</sup> Chechnya guarantees almost 100 per cent election participation and support for Moscow, though the cynicism and openness with which votes are stolen leave few believing in democratic processes. Chechens know the rules for survival.<sup>133</sup> "He doesn't need to resort to massive violence anymore", a local activist said. "Everyone in this republic knows someone badly mistreated by his people and that it is impossible to resist and useless to complain. Compliance or emigration are the only options".<sup>134</sup>

North Ossetia is another republic with virtually no official opposition, though it is much more liberal than Chechnya. Arsen Fadzaev, a strong political figure critical of the republic's government, is part of the establishment and until recently was a United Russia member. Soviet political traditions are strongly preserved, but political participation levels are low and election results closer to Russia's average. The main alternative voices are NGOs, especially the mothers groups of Beslan, which represent victims of the 2004 terrorist incident and demand an honest investigation of it. Individual civic activists, ecologists, religious leaders and ex-combatants do not add much color to the rather monotonous political landscape.<sup>135</sup>

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Throughout the North Caucasus, different interest groups control local business and government often through nepotism and corruption, generally undermining growth and efficiency. The opposition and civil society, where they exist, have been unable to push back. Moreover, they have been systematically silenced and oppressed in many quarters, resulting in growth of nationalism, Islamism and protest potential.

But recent developments in Dagestan, including arrests, suggest Moscow understands the negative effects of corruption and clanship on stability, especially if senior local officials start cooperating with the insurgency. Gossip about the links of clan leaders with insurgency that had circulated for a few years have recently been supported by several criminal cases.<sup>136</sup> Cadre reform, as undertaken by Abdulatipov,

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<sup>132</sup> "В Чечне празднование Дня России проходит при повышенных мерах безопасности" ["Russia's Day celebration in Chechnya takes place with extraordinary security measures"], *Caucasian Knot*, 12 June 2013.

<sup>133</sup> For more on the political process in Chechnya, see Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interview, Grozny, July 2013.

<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group interviews, experts, Vladikavkaz, August 2012, Moscow, March 2013.

<sup>136</sup> In Dagestan, a member of the Untsukul district council, Magomedkhabib Magomedaliev, was killed in a special operation in Semender, 20-23 March 2013, as he reportedly provided his house to insurgents, including a notorious militant leader from the same district, Ibragim Gadzhidadaev. On 27 June 2013, a member of Dagestan's assembly, Magomed Magomedov, was detained for alleged insurgency links. Media connected the arrest of Makhachkala's mayor, Said Amirov, to evidence provided by an insurgent, Sirazhutdin Guchuchaliev, arrested shortly before. The Supreme Court of Chechnya convicted an official for attempting to fund the insurgency. "В Чечне за попытку финансирования незаконных вооруженных формирований осужден чиновник" ["In Chechnya, an official convicted for attempting to finance illegal armed groups"], *Caucasian Knot*, 30 March 2013. "Арест Магомедова нанес еще один удар по клану Амирова" ["Magomedov's arrest was another blow on Amirov's clan"], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 28 June 2013. "В Дарестане в ходе

should be pursued, together with the arrest of officials engaged in criminal enterprises. Going after criminal gangs poses significant risk to civilian authorities and law enforcement personnel alike, but the greatest challenge is to follow legal procedures, so as to build the trust needed to reform the system without a witch-hunt. Unless freedom of assembly is fully respected and civic participation encouraged to help reduce protest potential and encourage local authorities' sense of accountability, power and resources might merely be transferred to yet another non-transparent elite.

## V. Rule of Law

Distrust in institutions tasked to ensure rule of law is even higher than that for regional authorities' commitment to good governance. Rule of law has been sacrificed since the First and especially Second Chechen War, which was marked by state agents' grave human rights violations, such as indiscriminate shelling and bombing;<sup>137</sup> enforced disappearances and secret prisons;<sup>138</sup> mass graves;<sup>139</sup> and death squads.<sup>140</sup> The Russian prosecutor general's office says that over 5,000 are still missing, and "it is almost impossible to establish their whereabouts now".<sup>141</sup>

As the conflict spilled over to other North Caucasus republics, so too did the abductions, torture, extrajudicial executions and falsified criminal cases.<sup>142</sup> A climate of fear, still most acute in Chechnya but also strong in other republics, became conducive to impunity and more violence. Since 1994, police from different regions who served in Chechnya have taken illegal practices back home with them when their tours ended, thus affecting rule of law throughout Russia. Some North Caucasus problems are similar to those elsewhere: inadequate reporting requirements, corruption, de-professionalisation of cadres and insufficient coordination. But security services' *carte blanche* in the North Caucasus allows much greater impunity.

Law-enforcement personnel in the region work in a high-risk environment. 209 security servicemen were killed in 2012 and another 55 in the first half of 2013.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> There have been twelve European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments on indiscriminate bombing.

<sup>138</sup> "Joint study on global practices in relation to secret detention in the context of countering terrorism", UN Human Rights Council, 26 January 2010. ECtHR decisions include *Vakhayeva and Others v. Russia*, 29 October 2009; and *Karimov and Others v. Russia*, 17 July 2009. Alexander Cherkasov, "Секретные тюрьмы России - на Кавказе" ["Russia's secret prisons are in the Caucasus"], *Svobodnaya pressa*, 27 January 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Human Rights Watch found that the majority of mass grave bodies "showed signs of severe mutilation, including flaying or scalping, broken limbs, severed finger tips and ears, and close range bullet wounds typical of summary executions". "The 'Dirty War' in Chechnya: Forced Disappearances, Torture and Summary", 1 March 2001. *Estamirov and others v. Russia*, ECtHR judgment on summary execution of five Chechen family members, 12 October 2006.

<sup>140</sup> Crisis Group interview, Alexander Cherkasov, Memorial, Moscow, June 2013. "Death squads continue to operate in Chechnya. Argun: new graves have been discovered and opened, new 'disappearances' of detainees", Memorial press conference, 13 March 2002.

<sup>141</sup> "Все вопросы должны решаться не по адатам, а в рамках закона" ["All problems should be resolved according to law, not adats [customary laws]"], *Kommersant* (online), 11 January 2013. Most disappeared persons are from Chechnya, where, according to Memorial, 3,000-5,000 went missing. Alexandr Cherkasov, "Книга чисел. Книга утрат. Книга страшного суда" [The book of numbers. The book of losses. The book of the Last Judgment], *Polit.ru*, 19 February 2004.

<sup>142</sup> See the ECtHR judgments, *Velkhiyev and Others v. Russia*, (34085/06) on torture and extrajudicial execution in Nazran in 2004; *Abdurashidova v. Russia*, (32968/05) on extrajudicial execution in Dagestan in 2005; and Memorial reports: "Похищения и исчезновения людей в Республике Дагестан в 2004-2007 годах" ["Abductions and forcible disappearance of people in Dagestan in 2004-2007"], August 2007; "Ингушетия: 2007 год. Куда дальше?" ["Ingushetia: 2007. Which way forward?"], January 2008; and "Исчезновения и похищения людей на территории Республики Северная Осетия – Алания" ["Forcible disappearance and abductions of people on the territory of North Ossetia-Alania"], July 2007.

<sup>143</sup> "Инфографика. Статистика жертв на Северном Кавказе за 2012 год" ["Infographics. Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus in 2012"], *Caucasian Knot*, 6 June 2013; "Infographics. Statistics of victims in the North Caucasus", first and second quarters of 2013, both op. cit. (fn. 1 above).



Investigators, prosecutors, and lawyers are also targets. Desire for revenge corrupts some in law enforcement, as it does insurgents.

A major security operation in Gimry (Dagestan), 11-21 April 2013, showed clearly how revenge can fuel abuse and block possibilities for non-violent conflict resolution. The mountain village, famous in the nineteenth-century Caucasus War as the birthplace of two legendary imams, strongly identifies with its history and remains overwhelmingly fundamentalist. The operation, involving up to 4,000 personnel, tanks and APCs was launched against militants. Most escaped (three were reportedly killed), but some 4,600 residents were displaced for ten days. According to the National Anti-terrorist Committee, unidentified perpetrators in the village opened fire on servicemen.<sup>144</sup> Police were then permanently stationed around the village and in the hospital, and a curfew and special entry regime were introduced. Returning locals reported that the police looted and destroyed property, supposedly for revenge. Ten houses of militants' relatives were blown up.

Several months after the events, Crisis Group found Gimry very tense. Villagers reported mistreatment, complained of restrictions affecting their ability to harvest crops and lack of compensation for damages during the counter-terrorist operation. Few sought help from state institutions they did not trust or whose secular authority they did not recognise. They said that militants had retained access to the village before the operation, and relatives and neighbours, often intermarried, offered support or at least did not report them even if they frequently disapproved of their methods.<sup>145</sup> A teacher said:

I defend secular education and was targeted by radicals for this, but my husband is the uncle of Gadzhidadaev [a notorious insurgent leader]; my niece was married to another militant. My head is spinning; I cannot comprehend what is happening here. This is our history continuing.

Meanwhile, the indiscriminate targeting of Gimry's population is distancing its people further from the state. Another resident explained:

It was bad and got worse. There are militants and security officials, and we are in between. We do not defend those guys [insurgents], but security services should also respect the law. We fled and left them alone with them; why didn't they solve the problem? Why did they let them escape and now terrorise us? They want to force us to report on them! And how should I find them? Should I go from house to house to check? It's their job, not mine. And who will protect me if I report on someone? .... The law has turned upside down. I do not want to turn to courts, because I do not believe that something can be achieved by legal means. And many people don't apply to state institutions because they also don't believe them. We've been abused so many times.<sup>146</sup>

The mother of the Dagestan insurgency's Sharia judge (*qadi*) explained that illegal measures used against those in detention make militant leaders unwilling to surren-

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<sup>144</sup> "В Гимрах окружили дагестанских амиров" ["The amirs of Dagestan were surrounded in Gimry"], *Kommersant*, 12 April 2013.

<sup>145</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Gimry, July 2013.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

der. “My son will not surrender”, she said. “He surrendered once; he does not trust any official anymore”.<sup>147</sup>

#### A. *Police*

Widespread unlawful practices, corruption, and insufficient competence permeate the police in the North Caucasus, substantially undermining effectiveness and trust. National police reform in 2010-2011 had little effect on professionalism in the region.<sup>148</sup> It is believed to have been used in some places as a pretext to fire rivals or critics of the corrupt system.<sup>149</sup>

Corruption starts at the recruitment or training phase and handicaps police throughout their career. A police colonel said, “the first bribe goes to a law school or a police training school; then you work to offset the costs. Everyone gives bribes in the police system. This system has been operating for years”.<sup>150</sup> Regardless of professional skills, it is hard to get a post without paying, especially in Dagestan. A rank-and-file position in the patrol and inspection service in Makhachkala reportedly costs 300,000-500,000 rubles (\$9,100-\$15,100) and an officer’s position in Khasavyurt 700,000-800,000 rubles (\$21,200-\$24,200). “People borrow money to pay the bribe, and naturally the new recruits are then primarily focused not on protecting citizens, but on making money to return the debt”, a Dagestan officer explained.<sup>151</sup> Required bribes (up to a million rubles, \$30,200) were so high in 2012 in that republic that there were too few applicants to fill all vacancies.<sup>152</sup> Rank-and-file salaries have risen to 30,000-40,000 rubles (\$900-\$1,200), but since the entry cost is so high, this does not halt bribery.

Republic police chiefs and high-ranking officers also reportedly illegally sell the services of more junior police to protect houses or serve as bodyguards. Crisis Group observed police guarding private mansions in Makhachkala. Some police units keep “dead souls” on the payroll: officers officially employed, but who never show up for work. Some are said to be senior officials or strongmen’s relatives, others paid sala-

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<sup>147</sup> Crisis Group interview, Bakirova Asiyat, mother of Magomed Suleymanov, Gimry, July 2013.

<sup>148</sup> The police reform was initiated by then-President Dmitry Medvedev to improve efficiency, decrease corruption and improve the public image of law enforcement. On 7 February 2011, amendments were made to laws on the police and the criminal and criminal procedure codes. They came into force on 1 March 2011, stipulating a 20 per cent personnel cut, renaming “militsiya” (militia) as “politsiya” (police), substantially increasing wages and centralising finances among other changes. “Оценка полицейской реформы: заседание президентского Совета по правам человека” [“Evaluation of police reform: The meeting of the Presidential Council on Human Rights”], Public Verdict, 12 April 2012.

<sup>149</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Magomed Shamilov, Independent trade union of law enforcement and prosecuting agencies personnel, Makhachkala, August 2012. “Глава фонда ‘Общественный вердикт’: Переаттестация лишила полицию лучших сотрудников” [“The head of Public Verdict foundation: Police lost the best staffers after re-attestation”], TV Rain (Dozhd), 24 April 2012. Re-attestation refers to the standard process of checking an employee’s qualifications.

<sup>150</sup> Crisis Group interview, Colonel Salikh Gadzhiev, ex-deputy head of non-departmental guards of the Dagestan interior ministry, Moscow, February 2013. He was fired after he participated in a press conference and gave interviews to media and NGOs disclosing egregious corruption in the ministry.

<sup>151</sup> “Офицеры МВД Дагестана требуют масштабной проверки ведомства” [“Officers of Dagestani MIA insist on a comprehensive inspection of the department”], Caucasian Knot, 2 March 2013. Crisis Group interviews, police colonels, Makhachkala, August 2012; lawyer, Khasavyurt, December 2012.

<sup>152</sup> Crisis Group interview, ex-deputy commander, first regiment of patrol and inspection service, Dagestan police, Moscow, February 2013.

ries that senior staff pocket.<sup>153</sup> There are officially 17,000 police in Dagestan, but many perform no duties, and those that do are often overworked.

Corruption is rarely prosecuted. In a rare June 2013 case, a representative of the NCFD prosecutor general's office announced that a criminal investigation had been instigated into large-scale fraud involving twenty police who allegedly received insurance compensation by presenting fake documents.<sup>154</sup>

There is little concern for the training or preparedness of recruits, which leaves them vulnerable.<sup>155</sup> "The militants do not miss, as they are quite well-trained in shooting. And these police, recruited on the criterion of who paid most, are not capable of defending themselves", a senior officer told Crisis Group. More chillingly, "sometimes death is even beneficial for a boss; he can sell the vacant position again".<sup>156</sup> Police casualties are not investigated properly and often simply blamed on dead militants, a former investigator in Dagestan said.<sup>157</sup>

Lack of coordination and shared intelligence undermines anti-terrorist efforts. "A traffic policeman is reluctant to check cars, especially in the darkness, as he has no operational information concerning which cars the fighters might be moving in, and he is afraid of every car. Intelligence needs to be improved, but the money allocated for this is spent on other purposes", officers complained.<sup>158</sup>

The system of evaluating efficiency mainly by quantitative indicators, eg, numbers of concluded cases or detainees, encourages illegal methods, such as beatings, torture and falsification of evidence.<sup>159</sup> Police see that some colleagues are targeted because of past abuse. "Children of those who were illegally detained, tortured and

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<sup>153</sup> One of two Dagestan patrol regiments, 600 strong, reportedly is not used for protecting public order. Crisis Group interview, Magomed Guseynov, deputy head of regiment, patrol-guard service, August 2012. "Офицеры МВД Дагестана требуют масштабной проверки ведомства" ["Officers of Dagestani MIA insist on a scaled inspection of the department"], *Caucasian Knot*, 2 March 2013; "Случай в горах" ["An incident in the mountains"], *Kommersant Vlast*, 11 March 2013. Dagestan has 54 police per 10,000 people, comparable to Russian regions without active insurgency but much less than Chechnya, which has 115:10,000. Nikolay Protsenko, "Дагестан на силовом крюке" ["Dagestan on the power hook"], *Expert*, 20 November 2012.

<sup>154</sup> "Более 20 дагестанских полицейских получили по 1 млн рублей за фиктивную инвалидность" ["More than 20 Dagestan police have got 1 million rubles each for fake disability"], *Russkaya planeta*, 26 June 2013.

<sup>155</sup> During the first months of 2013, police posts in Dagestan were attacked almost weekly. See, for example, "В Дагестане обстрелян наряд ДПС" ["A road-patrol service unit has been subjected to fire in Dagestan"], *Caucasus online*, 26 February 2013; "Неизвестные обстреляли полицейских в Дагестане" ["Unknowns fired at the police officers in Dagestan"], *RIA Novosti*, 9 March 2013; and "В Дагестане обстреляли блокпост" ["Police post subjected to fire in Dagestan"], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta (online)*, 12 April 2013.

<sup>156</sup> "Случай в горах" ["A case in mountains"], *Kommersant Vlast*, 11 March 2013; "Нас просто достали" ["We are simply fed up"], *Kommersant Vlast*, 11 March 2013. "В ходе вооруженного конфликта на Северном Кавказе в 2012 году погибли и были ранены 1225 человек" ["1,225 people killed and injured during the North Caucasus armed conflict in 2012"], *Caucasian Knot*, 21 January 2013.

<sup>157</sup> Crisis Group interviews, police officers, Makhachkala, August, December 2012; ex-investigator, Khasavyurt, December 2012.

<sup>158</sup> Crisis Group interviews, police officers, Makhachkala, August, December 2012.

<sup>159</sup> "Every month police, carrying out the plan [given to them by senior staff] detain guilty and innocent people". Crisis Group interviews, Magomed Shamilov, Independent trade union of law enforcement and prosecuting agencies personnel, Makhachkala, August 2012. "Офицеры МВД Дагестана требуют масштабной проверки ведомства" ["Officers of Dagestani MIA insist on a comprehensive inspection of the department"], *Caucasian Knot*, 2 March 2013.

killed in the 1990s have grown and started to take revenge”, a Dagestan officer said. But regardless of personal history or circumstance, the insurgency also attacks police because they represent the state. “There’s no employment here; the guys join the police because they need to provide for their wives, children and elderly parents”, a senior officer explained, “and then extremists say that these guys, who are also Muslims and also pray five times a day, are legitimate targets in jihad and should be killed!”<sup>160</sup>

Just as worrying as police inadequacies are recent efforts to set up security alternatives. The Stavropol Krai governor’s June 2013 announcement that 30 million rubles (about \$1 million) would be allocated for Cossack units was negatively perceived by representatives of other ethnic groups, especially in areas of acute ethnic tensions. In September 2012, after the killing of Dagestan’s most influential sheikh, Said Afandi Atsaev, President Magomedov decreed that militias be formed, and some villages raised such units for protection.<sup>161</sup>

The decision to establish a people’s militia in Khadzhalma-khi village of Dagestan’s Levashi district was justified by “the need to fight the Wahhabis”. 25 groups of twenty each rotate in patrolling streets together with a few police. They set up a checkpoint in the village centre, along a highway leading to mountain districts. Crisis Group observed very aggressive militiamen armed with guns and sticks stop every car, order everyone out, check documents and search the vehicles. Since the militia began operations, more than twenty Salafi families have fled the village. Seven Salafis were reportedly killed, including a woman and a young man savagely beaten by a crowd in the mosque. Most were on an unofficial “list of persons to be eliminated” circulated in April that included 33 Salafis.<sup>162</sup> On 30 June, the militia fired on a car carrying federal officials that refused to stop, causing the death of a staff member of the “RusHydro” state company. On 17 July two more people on the “elimination list” were abducted in two different towns and killed.<sup>163</sup>

This violence demonstrates the dangers of people’s militias that are meant to be overseen by local departments of the interior ministry but so far have been able to act with impunity. Rather than being supported by local executives, they should be banned, especially from intervening in ethnic or religious conflicts. Those militia members who have already been involved in violence, including kidnappings and

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<sup>160</sup> Crisis Group interview, police officer, Ingushetia, December 2012.

<sup>161</sup> “Ставропольскому губернатору тоже важно, кто живет в крае” [“Stavropol governor also cares who lives in the krai”], *Kommersant*, 1 June 2013; “Russia: Cossacks come back”, DW Media Centre, 19 June 2013; Zakir Magomedov, “И как один умрем в борьбе за это?” [“And all will die as one in this struggle?”], *Worldyou.ru*, 13 September 2012; Ivan Sukhov, “Где война, где не война, а где ислам” [“Somewhere there is a war, somewhere there is no war and somewhere is Islam”], *Moskovskie novosti*, 27 April 2011. “On involving citizens in protecting public security in the Republic of Dagestan”, Decree of the President of Dagestan no.144, 4 September 2012.

<sup>162</sup> “В дагестанском селении Хаджалмахи распространяются ‘расстрельные ‘списки’ мусульман-салафитов, заявляют жители” [“‘Execution lists’ of Salafi Muslims circulate in Khadzhalma-khi”], *Caucasian Knot*, 2 April 2013.

<sup>163</sup> “Дагестан. Пирамиды” [“Dagestan. Pyramids”], *Novaya Gazeta*, 15 July 2013; “МВД Дагестана объявило об убийстве в перестрелке людей, о похищении которых заявляли их родные” [“Dagestan MIA reports on killing people whose abduction was reported by relatives”], *Caucasian Knot*, 18 July 2013; “В Дагестане обнаружена убитой женщина, о похищении которой заявляли ее родственники” [“The woman whose abduction relatives reported found killed in Dagestan”], *Caucasian Knot*, 10 June 2013.

killings, should be prosecuted without delay to avoid further radicalisation of the population.

Police inefficiency and repression, combined with a citizenry increasingly taking security into its own hands, is bound to bring even more violence and instability. One of the victims commented a few days before his own murder:

I would love to turn to police, but what for? No one was even interrogated about these recent murders. It's just the beginning of confrontation. You don't have to be Wahhabi to avenge your murdered relatives. Extraordinary measures are needed to prevent major bloodshed.<sup>164</sup>

## **B. Investigation**

Investigating authorities face similar problems as the police. Coordination and competition between agencies remain challenges.<sup>165</sup> Rivalry is evident between the Investigative Committee that reports directly to the federal president, and the federal internal affairs ministry (MIA). The former has become stronger recently but operationally mainly relies on the MIA. This has led to conflicts of interest in investigation of police crimes. In 2012, an Investigation Committee special unit was created to which the Federal Security Service (FSB) gives operational support and that may be able to keep the needed distance from the police. But it has only 60 staffers for the whole country (twelve at the senior level), too few to respond to tens of thousands of applications against police violations and fully investigate abuse of authority.<sup>166</sup> The MIA sometimes investigates cases that may be in the jurisdiction of the FSB (extremism, terrorism) or the Federal Drug Control Service.<sup>167</sup>

The statistics do not inspire confidence in the official investigative authorities. While the North Caucasus has the most terrorist and insurgency-related incidents, it reports the fewest (after Stavropol Krai) of all other crimes. In the last three years, Chechnya averaged eight cases of bribery annually, despite numerous allegations of that offence and embezzlement of budget funds. This is partially because, as the Dagestan president said, "people do not turn to the law enforcement agencies, because the experience of those who have had the contact is, unfortunately, negative".<sup>168</sup> Many serious crimes, especially high-profile and political killings and those possibly involving security forces are not investigated.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Crisis Group observation, interviews, Khadzhalma, Makhachkala, July 2013.

<sup>165</sup> A number of federal agencies and departments are responsible for criminal investigation in Russia, including the internal affairs ministry, Investigative Committee, Federal Service for Drug Control and Federal Security Service (FSB). See Article 151, Criminal Procedure Code.

<sup>166</sup> Human rights defenders know of only a few cases investigated by this unit. Crisis Group interview, Natalia Taubina, director, Public Verdict Foundation, Moscow, July 2013. Alexander Raskin, "Полицейским нашли следователей" ["Police have found the investigators"], *Expert*, 19 April 2012.

<sup>167</sup> Crisis Group interview, Asmik Novikova, expert, Moscow, June 2013.

<sup>168</sup> See Judicial Statistics website, crimestat.ru, January 2013. "Глава Дагестана признал неэффективную работу по раскрытию убийств и похищений" ["The head of Dagestan acknowledged ineffectiveness of murder and kidnapping investigations"], *Caucasian Knot*, 30 November 2012.

<sup>169</sup> Only eighteen of 55 registered cases of abductions in 2011-2012 in Dagestan were investigated; less than half the murders were solved in Ingushetia in 2012. People are often released after being abducted, and those who are threatened by the insurgency do not turn to investigators. "The head of Dagestan acknowledged ineffectiveness", *Caucasian Knot*, op. cit.; "Налог на жизнь или "черная касса" боевиков" ["Life tax or "black cash" of fighters"], *Newsland.com*, 10 March 2011; "Прокура-

As with the police, the reporting system's emphasis on quantitative rather than qualitative indicators creates incentive to violate proper procedure.<sup>170</sup> "No one is really interested in truly investigating a crime; the only goal is to send cases to court", Adilgirey Omarov, a law firm chairman, told Crisis Group. Investigators whose cases remain unresolved or that are sent back by the court for further investigation can be penalised, so they prefer not to register crimes and open cases unless confident they have full evidence to prosecute.<sup>171</sup> They often lack time, motivation or skills to collect evidence and for expediency falsify it by planting incriminating material (eg, weapons or drugs), falsifying documents or extorting confessions or testimony under pressure, including torture. An ex-investigator offered this description:

Once our investigator's team arrived to conduct a search, and our boss told us to find weapons in the house. But the suspect was ready for this, and he took everything out; there was even no carpet to plant something under. Then one of the investigators put bullets behind the door. In an empty house, everyone heard them fall. Then, of course, we discovered and registered them as if discovered during the search.<sup>172</sup>

Police have reportedly at times planted evidence when they have identified women as belonging to radical Salafi groups. Mothers of two women accused of preparing suicide attacks alleged to Crisis Group that suicide belts were planted in their homes. Evidence collected by rights defenders appears to support their assertion.<sup>173</sup> Sources

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тура способна выполнить все возложенные на нее задачи" ["The Prosecutor's Office is capable of accomplishing all the given tasks"], Ingushetia online, 1 March 2013.

<sup>170</sup> Investigators receive positive marks for cases opened and transferred to court, especially involving serious crimes. Rehabilitation of the accused, acquittals (especially in criminal cases when a suspect was detained) and return of a criminal case for further investigation or termination mean negative marks and disciplinary sanctions that affect promotions and financial rewards. Alexandr Nazarov, "Критерии оценки деятельности сотрудников и подразделений Следственного Комитета при Прокуратуре Российской Федерации" ["The criteria for the evaluation of employees and units of the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation"], Polit.ru, 12 May 2010. Crisis Group interview, Asmik Novikova, expert, Moscow, June 2013. Similar problems exist in the interior ministry. By improving the reporting system during the police reform, the ministry tried to come up with criteria that would be more difficult to falsify, but they are still almost exclusively quantitative, so prone to manipulation. Centralisation of the ministry and unification of criteria aims primarily to control a huge bureaucracy rather than improve the quality of law enforcement in 83 diverse regions, according to experts. "Управление в полиции: бюрократическое производство преступности" ["Management of the police: The bureaucratic production of crime"], Public Verdict, 2011.

<sup>171</sup> *Kommersant* (online), 11 January 2013, op. cit. Crisis Group interview, Olga Shepeleva, legal expert, Moscow, April 2013. In 2009 in Chechnya upon request by the prosecutor's office, three quarters of the decisions not to open criminal proceedings were overturned, including 98 per cent of those made by the police. "Вступительное и заключительное слова Генерального прокурора Российской Федерации на межведомственном совещании руководителей правоохранительных органов Российской Федерации по вопросу укрепления законности и правопорядка" ["Opening and concluding speech of the Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation at the interdepartmental conference of leaders of security services of the Russian Federation on the issues of legality and order"], www.genproc.gov.ru.

<sup>172</sup> Crisis Group interview, ex-investigator, Khasavyurt, December 2012. "Дело дагестанских врачей" ["The case of Dagestani doctors"], *Kavkazskaya politika*, 13 February 2013.

<sup>173</sup> Crisis Group interview, Oleg Orlov, Hot Spots program director, Memorial, Moscow, July 2013. Crisis Group observations and interviews, Abukarova Zaveyriyhat, Abukarova Malikat, mothers of arrested Salafi women, Makhachkala, July 2013.

confirmed that these and two other young women arrested on similar evidence were radical Salafis who often spoke of jihad; at least one is reportedly married to an insurgent. Dagestan's ombudswoman described an officer's possible self-interested rationale for such arrest methods: "How do our security officials think? If another terrorist attack happens tomorrow, I will be removed from my position".<sup>174</sup> But sending persons to jail on fabricated charges almost certainly guarantees their greater radicalisation.

Suspects are at high risk of torture, as confessions are often the main evidence presented in court. It is most common when suspects are kept incommunicado. Russian law allows suspects to be held for ten days in an internal affairs ministry temporary detention facility (IVS), after which they should be transferred to a Federal Penality Execution Agency pre-trial detention facility (SIZO). The latter are more autonomous, with doctors more likely to document traces of beatings or refuse to accept those who have been visibly mistreated.<sup>175</sup> Investigators thus often hold suspects longer in an IVS than allowed. While relatives and their lawyers cruise detention centres trying to find a suspect, investigators may try to work with cooperative lawyers who turn a blind eye to traces of torture and other violations and sometimes sign protocols even without seeing the client. In such cases lawyers hired by relatives are denied access to clients, while suspects are forced to "voluntarily" decline their services in favour of cooperative advocates.<sup>176</sup>

Such allegedly cooperative lawyers, locally termed "red" or "black", have become targets for the insurgency. In May 2013 the leader of the Bujnaks (Dagestan) insurgency issued death threats to them. On the other hand, independent lawyers are often police targets. Five cases of beatings of female lawyers in Dagestan police stations were reported in 2010 and one in 2013; none have been investigated. Lawyers from other republics have received death threats, and some have died violently.<sup>177</sup>

A defence lawyer can at best insist that a criminal case be opened against police who abuse their authority, but it will rarely reach court. Violence is used even when investigating petty crimes; perpetrators usually remain free even in cases taken over by a republic's chief executive. A criminal case was filed against three Shamilsky district (Dagestan) police for savagely beating fourteen-year-old Makhmud Ahmedov, who was instructed to confess to stealing a \$30 drill. Though the case attracted attention and was taken under special control by the republic's president, and all three were found guilty, only one received a serious sentence, and it was overturned by the republic's Supreme Court; two received the lowest possible conditional sentences

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<sup>174</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ummapazil Omarova, Dagestan ombudswoman, Makhachkala, July 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Crisis Group interview, Rustam Matsev, Kabardino-Balkaria defence lawyer, Moscow, June 2013.

<sup>176</sup> At least twenty cases of denied access to clients have been registered in Kabardino-Balkaria in 2012-2013. A lawyer in Karachay-Cherkessia was denied access for nine days in June 2013, one in Dagestan for nine months. "Адвокаты объявили полиции забастовку" ["Lawyers went on strike against the police"], *Kommersant*, 18 April 2013; Crisis Group interviews, Adilgirey Omarov, lawyer, Khasavyurt, December 2012, July 2013. "Сто часов в аду" ["100 hours in hell"], *Expert* (online), 22 September 2011; "Карачаево-Черкесия: на адвоката оказывают давление" ["Karachay-Cherkessia: A lawyer pressured"], Memorial, 25 June 2012. "... нас ваххабитской конторой" ["... we are [called] Wahhabi office"], *Chernovik*, 2 August 2013.

<sup>177</sup> "Confronting the circle of injustice: Threats and pressure faced by lawyers in the North Caucasus", Amnesty International, 2013. "Замначальника Буйнакского ОМВД подозревается в избивании женщины-адвоката" ["Deputy chief of Bujnaks MIA department suspected of beating a female lawyer"], *Yuga.ru*, 20 March 2013. "Адвокаты объявили полиции забастовку" ["Lawyers went on strike against police"], *Kommersant*, 18 April 2013.

and reportedly continue to terrorise the boy's family.<sup>178</sup> Relatives of suspected insurgents are also subject to beatings and torture, especially in Chechnya.<sup>179</sup>

This high degree of police impunity, even in cases involving minors and suspects who have nothing to do with the insurgency, greatly contributes to radicalisation. After over-hearing about the brutality case described above, a young taxi driver exclaimed: "And do you think they [the police] will be punished? Never! Killing them is the only option!"<sup>180</sup>

Sexual abuse against women and girls is seldom reported; if it is reported, it is poorly investigated and prosecuted. Saida, a sixteen-year-old victim of repeated sexual violence from Dagestan, said:

The investigator told me that I should better marry one of these guys. I told him, "what are you talking about – they raped me!" He said that in the previous case he worked on the victim also refused to get married to the rapist, but later she did.<sup>181</sup>

A senior police officer responsible for adolescent crime commented: "I think they [rapists] deserve murder. The fathers should solve these problems on their own".<sup>182</sup> Lack of security and effective investigations of sexual abuse causes many parents to become more conservative and stricter with their daughters and instruct them to wear modest dress, even hijab.

The investigation system is also seriously corrupt. Often suspects are initially charged with many crimes, as a way for investigators to collect bribes for reducing the charges.<sup>183</sup> Human rights groups claim prosecutors not only ignore crimes but also actively cover them up.<sup>184</sup> The Russian deputy prosecutor general announced that his office had not identified a single violation by law enforcement officers during security operations. The head of the prosecutor's office in a republic is appointed by Moscow and usually is an ethnic Russian, except in Chechnya.<sup>185</sup>

Impunity is such that FSB officers in Dagestan reportedly do not appear for questioning by the federal Investigative Committee, which in Chechnya cannot even ensure police presence at investigations and reportedly requires military protection due to threats from local security forces.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> "Полицейские, обвиняемые в избииении подростка в Дагестане, осуждены на два года условно" ["Police officers accused of beating a teenage boy in Dagestan are sentenced to two years probation"], *Caucasian Knot*, 22 November 2012. "Верховный суд Дагестана направил дело об избииении подростка на новое рассмотрение" [Supreme Court of Dagestan sent the case of beat-up teenager for a new hearing], *Caucasian Knot*, 11 July 2013.

<sup>179</sup> "Мемориал' о событиях на Северном Кавказе" ["Memorial' on events in the North Caucasus], *Memorial*, 16 January 2012, 9 June 2012. Crisis Group interviews, victims of illegal violence, Grozny, December 2012, August 2013.

<sup>180</sup> Crisis Group interview in another capacity, Makhachkala, July 2011.

<sup>181</sup> Crisis Group interview, Makhachkala, December 2012.

<sup>182</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Makhachkala, August 2012.

<sup>183</sup> "Нас просто достали" ["We are simply fed up"], *Kommersant Vlast*, 11 March 2013.

<sup>184</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Dagestan, January 2013.

<sup>185</sup> "All problems should be resolved by law", *Kommersant* (online), op. cit.

<sup>186</sup> "Чечня: Следственный комитет и прокуратура расписались в собственном бессилии" ["Chechnya: Investigatory Committee and Prosecutor's Office acknowledged their weakness"], *Memorial*, 20 April 2011; "Кавказские борзые" ["Caucasian wolfhounds"], *Esquire* (online), 8 August 2011. Crisis Group interview, Adilgirey Omarov, law firm chair, Khasavyurt, December 2012; email correspondence, Igor Kalyarin, Committee against Torture, April 2013. "Аналитическая справка о состоянии расследования уголовных дел, возбужденных по факту исчезновения людей в



Federal investigative authorities transfer some high-profile cases in which senior local security officers or officials may be involved to the NCFD level. This happened with the killing of Dagestani opposition journalist Khadzhimurat Kamalov in December 2011. The chief investigator of the Investigative Committee's main directorate for the Southern Federal District, Igor Sobol, has several important cases under his remit, including the 2009 murder of the Chechen human rights activist Natalya Estemirova. However, her former colleagues assert that a false narrative is being constructed so as to accuse insurgents and let off the real perpetrators.<sup>187</sup> President Abdulatipov said that more than twenty interior ministry central office investigators have arrived in Dagestan since his appointment to investigate crimes by that ministry's officers and others. But transfers remain rare. It took 105 signatures of State Duma members to move the Kamalov case to the federal level.<sup>188</sup>

Lack of effective investigation even in high-profile cases is perceived by local residents as one of the most important indicators of state inefficiency and has led to public protests, for example in 2012 in Karachay-Cherkessia. Failure to investigate the murders of politicians and Circassian activists in 2009-2010 was an argument by the Congress of the Circassian People to justify its claim for autonomy.<sup>189</sup> It is also a major driver of the insurgency. The cousin of a man recently arrested on suspicion of aiding the militants explained: "My cousin and these other guys were detained and tortured together. Three or four years later they will be released, angry and longing for revenge. Then I will not sit at home – I will join them".<sup>190</sup>

### C. The Judicial System

Courts in the North Caucasus are rife with corruption, clanishness and nepotism. The near 99 per cent conviction rate suggests there is little chance an accused in pre-trial

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Чеченской Республике" ["Analytical briefing on status of investigation of criminal cases instigated into disappearances in the Chechen Republic"], Committee against Torture, May 2012.

<sup>187</sup> Sobol also works on the abduction and incarceration of Islam Umarpashaev, illegally held for four months by the riot police in Chechnya in 2009, and major embezzlement of state funds in Dagestan's Tabasaransky district. "Два года после убийства Натальи Эстемировой: следствие идёт по ложному пути" ["Two years after the murder of Natalya Estemirova: The investigation follows the wrong path"], The International Federation for Human Rights, *Novaya Gazeta*, Memorial, 14 July 2011. "Кто убил Наташу" ["Who killed Natasha?"], 11 September 2011, <http://video.yandex.ru/users/felix-shved/view/5/#>.

<sup>188</sup> "Caucasian wolfhounds", *Esquire* (online), op. cit.; "Рамазан Абдулатипов, и. о. президента Дагестана: 'Всех моих предшественников сожрали кланы'" ["Ramazan Abdulatipov, Acting President of Dagestan: 'All my predecessors have been swallowed by clans'"], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 30 April 2013; "Дело об убийстве дагестанского журналиста передано следователям СКФО" ["The case into killing of the Dagestani journalist transferred to the NCFD investigators"], *Rossiyskaya gazeta* (online), 28 May 2012. Crisis Group interview, Adilgeroy Omarov, law firm chair, Khasavuyurt, Dagestan, July 2013.

<sup>189</sup> Republic legislator Islam Krymshamkhalov, Circassian activist Aslan Zhukov and presidential adviser Fral' Shebzukhov were killed by unidentified persons. "Родные убитого в Карачаево-Черкессии депутата Крымшамхалова пикетировали резиденцию Хлопонина" ["Relatives of the deputy Krymshamkhalov murdered in Karachay-Cherkessia picketed Kholoponin's office"], *Caucasian Knot*, 30 March 2012.

<sup>190</sup> Crisis Group interview, Makhachkala, July 2013. For two days independent lawyers could not get access to the arrested man; when they did, he had reportedly been savagely beaten to produce a confession. On personal revenge, see <http://bit.ly/13W6mQC>.

detention will be acquitted.<sup>191</sup> Only five of 150 terrorism and extremism cases resulted in acquittals in 2012.<sup>192</sup> Courts de facto have the function of control over the quality of investigation but mostly assess only procedural requirements, not evidence quality. “An acquittal not only criticises the whole chain of law enforcement officers who worked on the case, but is a public acknowledgment of the failure of the state machinery of criminal prosecution”, a legal expert argued.<sup>193</sup>

Though monthly salaries of judges were increased in December 2012, pervasive corruption at all levels of the judiciary process makes for mutual dependence to both secure bribes and avoid sanctions.<sup>194</sup> “The Investigative Committee, the prosecutor’s office, the police ... are all intertwined like an octopus’s tentacles”, the head of a law firm said.<sup>195</sup> For example, a falsely accused person may seek compensation for unlawful prosecution and detention, but a judge can help avoid this by covering up investigators’ mistakes. Most judges are beholden to the executive, the prosecutor or the security services. Especially “in terrorism cases, judges are afraid of the FSB, as they can lose their jobs by making wrong decisions”, a source said.<sup>196</sup> Rather than issuing acquittals, more honest judges prefer to give a minimal sentence (perhaps what has already been served in preliminary detention) or to return a case to prosecutors if they believe evidence was fabricated, several defence lawyers said.<sup>197</sup>

The massive multi-year trial of 58 persons accused of a 2005 attack on Nalchik illustrates some of the problems. Jury trials, re-introduced in Russia in 1993, acquit more often than do professional judges.<sup>198</sup> In this case, however, almost a year was wasted identifying jurors before jury trials were banned in 2009 for terrorism-related crimes. Many of the accused repeatedly complain of torture, beatings and denial of

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<sup>191</sup> The president plays a decisive role in appointing judges: he recommends candidates to the Federation Council, which approves the chairs and judges of the Constitutional, Supreme and Supreme Arbitration Courts. He appoints chairs and deputies of courts of the federal regions and district courts on recommendation of the chairs of the Supreme and Supreme Arbitration Courts. Chairs of regional and district courts appoint judges by recommendation of a board of judges. Judges of the magistrate courts are appointed by regional assemblies or elected by the residents of the judicial district depending on regional law. Articles 5, 6, 6.1 of Law 3132-1, “On the Status of Judges in the Russian Federation”, 26 June 1992; and Article 6 of Federal Law 188-FZ, “On magistrates in the Russian Federation”, 17 December 1998. “ВС РФ: в России выносятся менее процента оправдательных приговоров” [“RF Supreme Court: less than 1 per cent of acquittals in Russia”], Pravo.ru, 4 September 2009.

<sup>192</sup> “All problems should be resolved according to law”, *Kommersant* (online), op. cit.

<sup>193</sup> Crisis Group interview, Asmik Novikova, Moscow, June 2013.

<sup>194</sup> Monthly salaries have risen from 71,000 to 85,000 rubles (\$2,575) for a magistrate; from 102,000 to 104,000 rubles (\$3,150) for a district court judge; from 115,000 to 132,000 rubles (\$4,000) for a regional court judge; and from 132,000 to 150,000 rubles (\$4,550) for an arbitration court judge. “Президент РФ одобрил законы о повышении зарплат судьям” [“The President of RF approved legislation raising judges’ salaries”], *Federal Press*, 27 December 2012.

<sup>195</sup> Crisis Group interview, Adilgirey Omarov, Khasavyurt, December 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Crisis Group interview, Dagestan lawyer, Dagestan, December 2012.

<sup>197</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Dagestan lawyers, ex-investigator, Khasavyurt, Makhachkala, December 2012; ex-police officer, Moscow, May 2013. Asmik Novikova, “Практики суррогатных оправдательных приговоров” [“Practices of surrogate acquittals”], Polit.ru, 14 February 2013.

<sup>198</sup> “Медведев походатайствовал за присяжных. Президент призвал следователей научиться работать с присяжными” [“Medvedev interceded for jury. President called investigators to learn how to work with the jury”], Gazeta.ru, 25 February 2009.

medical care, but the judge has refused to order an investigation.<sup>199</sup> When 30 began a protest for medical care in March 2013, she removed them from court for the rest of the trial, except to testify.<sup>200</sup>

Even the Constitutional Court has been unable to have much of an effect. One of the most important sources of conflict between ethnic groups in the region has been land. Its 2007 decision that the Kabardino-Balkarian law on inter-village territories and on merging two villages with the republic's capital, Nalchik, was unconstitutional was ignored.

As people feel their grievances and conflicts are seldom efficiently resolved in courts, they resort to other measures, including insurgency, to protect perceived rights.<sup>201</sup> "Many cases of 'joining the forest'", Dagestan's acting president recently said, "are a result of outrageous treatment by a whole range of law enforcement agencies".<sup>202</sup>

#### D. *In Search of Alternative Justice*

Due to the serious flaws of their national legal system, many North Caucasus residents look for justice elsewhere. The first applications to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) were submitted from Chechnya in 2000, claiming violations of the right to life, torture, illegal detention, destruction of property and enforced disappearances. As the conflict expanded, cases were also filed from Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria and North Ossetia. Since the first decisions in 2005, there have been 213 rulings, 198 on Chechnya. 161 confirmed enforced disappearances; all but one found a lack of effective investigation.<sup>203</sup> In June 2013, the ECtHR ruled that refusal to return the bodies of killed terrorists to their families after the 2005 attack on Nalchik violated the "right to respect for private and family life".<sup>204</sup> Following a judgment, Russia is obligated not only to pay compensation and legal fees, but also to implement measures to rectify the violations and adopt policy and legal changes to prevent similar violations in future, but it has rarely done the latter.<sup>205</sup>

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) exercises an important monitoring and advocacy function by appointing special rapporteurs, adopt-

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<sup>199</sup> Crisis Group court observations, interviews with lawyers, Nalchik, March, December 2012, March, May 2013. "Кабардино-Балкария: в Нальчике продолжается 'процесс 58-ми'" ["Kabardino-Balkaria: The 'process of 58' is continuing in Nalchik"], Memorial, 29 March 2013.

<sup>200</sup> Two of the seriously ill suspects went on a two-week hunger strike; one slit his wrists. Irina Gordienko, "Процесс 58-ми" ["Process of 58"], *Kavkazskaya politika*, 20 June 2012; "Суд в КБР удалил из зала 30 фигурантов дела о нападении на Нальчик" ["Court in KBR removed 30 defendants from the courtroom in the Nalchik case"], RIA Novosti, 21 March 2013. Crisis Group interviews, relatives and lawyers of the accused, Nalchik, December 2012.

<sup>201</sup> For more on the conflicts, see Crisis Group Report, *Ethnicity and Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 19-23.

<sup>202</sup> "Абдулатипов назвал силовиков и чиновников основными нарушителями прав жителей Дагестана" ["Abdulatipov named law enforcement agents and officials as main violators of rights of Dagestani residents"], *Caucasian Knot*, 1 March 2013.

<sup>203</sup> In 2011, the Court held that the lack of investigation into abductions in Chechnya was a systemic problem and that changes of policy and law should be instituted to prevent recurrence (*Aslakhanova and others v. Russia*). For ECtHR cases from the North Caucasus, see Russian Justice Initiative [www.srji.org/en/legal/cases](http://www.srji.org/en/legal/cases). Crisis Group interview, Kirill Koroteev, legal specialist on ECtHR, Moscow, August 2013.

<sup>204</sup> ECtHR judgement on case of *Sabanchiyeva and others v. Russia*, 6 June 2013.

<sup>205</sup> "Who Will Tell Me What Happened to My Son?", Human Rights Watch, 2009. Crisis Group interviews, Furkat Tishaev, Kirill Koroteev, legal specialists on ECtHR, Moscow, August 2013.

ing resolutions and issuing recommendations on the conflict in the North Caucasus.<sup>206</sup> In 1999-2000, it called for Russia's suspension from the Council of Europe if violations persisted in Chechnya.<sup>207</sup> In 2006, it warned that "systematic human rights violations and the climate of complete impunity were bound to foster the rise of extremist movements and their propagation beyond the borders of the Chechen Republic".<sup>208</sup> Four years later, it concluded that "those fears were, alas, founded", and the situation in the region, particularly in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, was "the most serious and most delicate situation from the standpoint of safeguarding human rights and upholding the rule of law, in the entire geographical area covered by the Council of Europe".<sup>209</sup>

While PACE has found that the authorities have paid financial compensation required by ECtHR judgments, it has also called on the government to reopen cases in which the Court found investigatory neglect. That this has only rarely happened maintains a feeling of injustice among victims.<sup>210</sup>

The deteriorating quality of state institutions has also increasingly led North Caucasus residents to Islamic and customary law. Unlike in Soviet times, these are not prohibited by Russia's criminal code.<sup>211</sup> In Ingushetia, Sharia courts work with an Egypt-educated *qadi* (judge); republic Sharia courts operate in Nazran and in *jameh* (Friday) mosques. They mainly hear cases related to family disputes (including bride abduction and rape), inheritance, land and "private charges", such as libel and defamation, or incidents that provoke material and physical damages. At a minimum, they reduce the work-load of secular courts.<sup>212</sup>

Dispute resolution based on Sharia and adat – customary law – occurs unofficially in Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>213</sup> Chechen authorities insist there are no Sharia courts in the republic.<sup>214</sup> The canonical department of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of

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<sup>206</sup> It has been most vocal on Chechnya. See PACE Resolution 1201 (1999); 1221 and 1227 (2000); 1240 (2001); 1270 (2002); 1315 and 1323 (2003); 1402-1404 (2004); 1479 (2006); 1738 (2010); and 1879 (2012).

<sup>207</sup> On 13 December 1999, the PACE Bureau adopted a declaration on the situation in Chechnya according to which "persistence in violations could lead the Parliamentary Assembly to put under question Russian participation in the Assembly's work and in the Council of Europe in general". The next year, PACE Recommendation 1456 (2000) called on the Committee of Ministers to initiate without delay, in accordance with Article 8 of the Statute, the procedure for Russia's suspension, "should substantial, accelerating and demonstrable progress not be made immediately ... in respect of the requirements set out by the Assembly".

<sup>208</sup> PACE Resolution 1479 (2006) on human rights violations in the Chechen Republic.

<sup>209</sup> Resolution 1738 (2010) on "Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus Region".

<sup>210</sup> "Who Will Tell Me What Happened to My Son?", op. cit.

<sup>211</sup> Articles 203, 204, Criminal Code of RSFSR, 1926. Articles 231, 232, 235, Criminal Code of RSFSR, 1960. Criminal Code of Russian Federation, 1996.

<sup>212</sup> 70 per cent of Sharia cases are processed in local *jameh* mosques; 30 per cent come to the republic Sharia court, which processes four to six cases per week. "Шариат отстаивает право на Кавказ" ["Sharia masters the right to the Caucasus"], *NG religia*, 18 April 2012.

<sup>213</sup> Experts note an increase in appeals to Sharia for solving family property disputes in Karachay-Cherkessia. "Адат, шариат и российский закон в жизни мусульман КЧР" ["Adat, Sharia and the Russian law in the life of Muslims of Karachay-Cherkessia"], *Ansar* (online), 16 April 2012.

<sup>214</sup> "The most important thing for a Muslim is to observe the laws of the country in which he lives". Interview of Ramzan Kadyrov's press secretary, Al'vi Karimov, *Ekho Moskvy* (online), 25 April 2012. "Р.Кадиров: Заявления юриста Д.Хасавова носят заказной характер" ["R.Kadyrov: statement of the lawyer, D.Khasavov, has an ordered nature"], *RBC* (online), 25 April 2012.

Dagestan, imams and knowledgeable local people use Sharia. Some mountain villages, such as Gimry or Balakhani, continued to live by it even in Soviet times. Some lowland villages create special bodies of respected residents for its use and adat.<sup>215</sup> Land disputes, especially with *kutans*, are often resolved in the mosques, with magistrate courts sometimes merely legalising the decisions.<sup>216</sup> Informal Sharia adjudication occurs mainly among Sufis (the majority of practising Muslims), but Salafis also organise it, especially in Dagestan.<sup>217</sup> Crisis Group observed a regular meeting of Islamic scholars in Makhachkala to resolve disputes by Sharia, in some instances after a state court was unable to do so.<sup>218</sup> Sharia court decisions are made quickly, but implementation is voluntary and more difficult to assure in cities where community pressure is less strong.<sup>219</sup>

The Spiritual Board of Muslims of Dagestan advocates legalisation of Sharia courts. According to the deputy mufti, Magomed Gadzhiyev, resolving civil disputes by Sharia in mediation courts (*третейские суды*) “will strengthen Muslims’ respect for the state; they will feel like full citizens and limit the space for criticism of the Russian state from extremist Muslims”.<sup>220</sup> Legalisation, which might remove the issue of non-implementation of Sharia decisions, could best be done by amending the Law on Mediation Courts.<sup>221</sup> The Conference of Muslims of Ingushetia recently urged use of traditional mechanisms to end human rights violations, including posting the names of perpetrators in mosques and have representatives of *virids* (sects of Sufi brotherhoods) denounce or expel them.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> The informal council “*Divan*” of 30 people works in the village of Novosaitli, Khasavyurt district. The “*Jamaat*” of the village of Novogagatli includes 22 people. But, according to experts, these structures are rather rare in the lowlands, where ethnic groups do not live compactly. Ivan Sukhov, “Somewhere there is a war”, op. cit. Crisis Group interview, Denis Sokolov, Moscow, April 2013. Presentation of Yuri Karpov, head, Department of Ethnography of the Peoples of the Caucasus, Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences, at round table conference “The North Caucasus: The mechanisms and risks of land reform”, Bekasovo, Moscow region, 18-19 May 2013.

<sup>216</sup> *Kutans* were in Soviet times temporary settlements in the lowlands for shepherds coming down from the mountains. Many have become permanent settlements, but they often remain unregistered. Konstantin Kazenin, “Перспективы и риски многонациональных районов равнинного Дагестана” [“Prospects and risks of the multinational regions in the plains of Dagestan”], Regnum, 8 October 2011. For example, a land dispute decision by the imam of the village of Orota, Khunzakh district, was upheld by the magistrate court. Crisis Group interview, Denis Sokolov, Moscow, April 2013.

<sup>217</sup> Crisis Group interview, Akhmet Yarlykapov, senior researcher, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, April 2012.

<sup>218</sup> Crisis Group observation of Sharia trial, Makhachkala, July 2012. “Салафиты, которые рядом” [“Salafis who are near us”], *Novaya gazeta* (online), 8 August 2012.

<sup>219</sup> Crisis Group knows of a case in which a person refused to comply with a Sharia court decision in Khasavyurt and continued to attend the mosque. In 2007, in Nazran, dissatisfied parties to a dispute fought with guns after leaving the Sharia court. Ibid; “Перестрелка около мечети в Назрани произошла после заседания шариатского суда” [“Shoot-out near mosque in Nazran occurred after a session of Sharia court”], Institute of Religion and Policy, 26 August 2007. Crisis Group interviews, Khalilrakhman Shamatov, leader of the Akhlu-Sunnah (association of Islamic scholars) in Dagestan, Makhachkala, July 2012; Adilgirey Omarov, lawyer, Khasavyurt, December 2012.

<sup>220</sup> Magomed Gadzhiyev, first deputy, mufti of Dagestan, “Шариатские суды – реальность?” [“Sharia courts: a reality?”], speech, Public Chamber of Russia, March 2013.

<sup>221</sup> Federal Law 102, 24 July 2002, “On Mediation courts in the Russian Federation”, Articles 6, 33. Crisis Group online conversation, Ziyautdin Uvajsov, Salafi lawyer from Makhachkala, April 2013.

<sup>222</sup> “Материалы с конференции мусульман Республики Ингушетия от 29 июня 2013г. г.Назрань” [“Materials of the Conference of Muslims ... Nazran”], Magas.ru, 29 June 2013.

Reactions by Russian authorities have been mixed. President Putin supported the increase of bride-money due to inflation that the Congress of Muslims adopted in Ingushetia in 2010. But Deputy Prosecutor General Ivan Sydoruk has said, “our ideology, the ideology of the state, is that all issues should be resolved not by adat or a Sharia court, not by a specific person, but within the framework of law”.<sup>223</sup>

The insurgency has its own system of Sharia judges, who resolve disputes among the insurgents but also rule on general issues. Some radical but non-violent Salafis also recognise their judgments. Crisis Group was told that in 2012 the *qadi* of the Dagestan insurgency forbade all who follow him to turn to human rights organisations and prohibited widows of killed insurgents to seek state pensions for their children in the courts, but these bans were later lifted.<sup>224</sup>

Opportunities exist for government officials to engage in dialogue with non-violent Salafis to overcome conflict and encourage their integration. The commissions for the rehabilitation of fighters that were set up in several North Caucasus republics in 2010-2012 also offer a mechanism to engage with fighters. They could likewise be used to assist former fighters who have served their prison terms and now need assistance to reintegrate economically and socially into peaceful life and avoid a return to militancy. However the commissions’ work is being questioned by some security services, and, as noted above, at least in Dagestan the entity was closed and replaced by a body with a broader mandate and unclear procedure. Instead, these commissions should be given stronger mandates, including with a greater role for civil society representatives.

To encourage insurgents to lay down their weapons, the Duma should consider a new amnesty program, and security services should reinforce efforts to negotiate the surrender of armed groups even while the prospects for any negotiations between the insurgency and the state on broader political issues is unfeasible. In 2013, Ramazan Abdulatipov supported the amnesty concept, emphasising that “we should learn to forgive each other”. In response, the National Anti-terrorist Committee stated that an amnesty should be offered to those who have not committed crimes that require a prison sentence.<sup>225</sup> However, such a narrow amnesty would be unlikely to have much effect on fighters, so should be broadened to include more serious crimes, such as participation in assault on the life of a law-enforcement official (Article 317 of the Criminal Code), though not killing.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Bride money (*kalym*) is money paid by the groom to the parents of his bride before marriage. “Путин поддержал решение мусульман Ингушетии повысить выкуп за невесту” [“Putin supports Muslims of Ingushetia in decision to increase bride-money”], NEWSru.com, 7 July 2010. “All problems should be resolved according to law”, *Kommersant* (online), op. cit.

<sup>224</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Dagestan, Moscow, April, August 2012.

<sup>225</sup> In November 2011, the Dagestan parliament submitted a draft amnesty law to the Duma, “On announcing amnesty for people who committed crimes in the period of anti-terrorist operations on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan”. “Парламент Дагестана одобрил идею об амнистии за преступления во время КТО” [“The Parliament of Dagestan approved the idea of amnesty for crimes during the CTO”], *Kommersant*, 17 November 2011. “Абдулатипов заявил о возможности амнистии для боевиков в Дагестане” [“Abdulatipov said that amnesty for militants in Dagestan is possible”], *Caucasian Knot*, 25 June 2013. “НАК готов рассмотреть инициативу властей Дагестана об амнистии для боевиков” [“NAC is ready to look into Dagestan authorities’ initiative of amnesty for fighters”], *Kavkaz Online*, 26 June 2013.

<sup>226</sup> Human rights organisations support a broader amnesty. “Дагестан: лесные на выход?” [“Dagestan: Will forest people exit?”], *Bolshoy Kavkaz*, 25 June 2013. Some local experts, however, fear that a broad amnesty would increase insecurity and free dangerous radicals. “Амнистия для ‘леса’:

## VI. Conclusion

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Authentic improvement in the quality of governance in the North Caucasus is only possible if democratic institutions, such as elections, independent judiciary and rule of law are established. Fair elections, preceded by competitive political processes, are a prerequisite for holding state officials accountable. Effective checks and balances could help ensure the state is not captured by elites. Federal political parties should work harder to understand the region's problems, participate in its politics and reflect its agendas. The fight against criminal activities of clan networks should be vigorous and consistent, but strictly within the law. The first steps taken in Dagestan give grounds for optimism and should be continued.

Deficits of democratic legitimacy and accountability, grave human rights violations and officials' impunity have contributed much to the spread of conflict. The state – too frequently seen to be represented by corrupt, ineffective and unfairly elected officials and protected by police who use methods as brutal as those of the criminals – is often perceived as illegitimate, immoral and repressive. Salafis offer in its place an Islamist state, to be based on Sharia, and claim that it would be more virtuous and fair, a project many angered, disillusioned youths find attractive. The recently growing demand for alternative justice is due to the inefficiency of the state's law-enforcement and judicial systems as much as ideology. The secular state can defeat radical propaganda only if it offers an effective, fair alternative.

A functioning federal system with a degree of decentralisation and appropriate regional representation in the Duma in Moscow would facilitate the North Caucasus's integration with the rest of Russia. Such integration is essential for the country's security, healthy ethnic relations and stability. While conflict in the North Caucasus is expressed through a violent insurgency and tense ethnic relations, lack of democratic institutions, rule of law, and popular trust in the state fuel much of the instability and must be addressed for tensions eventually to cool.

**Moscow/Brussels, 6 September 2013**

Appendix A: Map of the North Caucasus





## Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

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The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 150 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org). Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former U.S. Undersecretary of State and Ambassador Thomas Pickering. Its President and Chief Executive since July 2009 has been Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

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**September 2013**

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*The Rule of Law in Independent Kosovo*, Europe Report N°204, 19 May 2010 (also available in Albanian and Serbian).

*Kosovo and Serbia after the ICJ Opinion*, Europe Report N°206, 26 August 2010 (also available in Albanian and Serbian).

*Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Parallel Crisis*, Europe Report N°209, 28 September 2010 (also available in Bosnian).

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*Bosnia's Gordian Knot: Constitutional Reform*, Europe Briefing N°68, 12 July 2012 (also available in Bosnian).

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*Serbia and Kosovo: The Path to Normalisation*, Europe Report N°223, 19 February 2013 (also available in Albanian and Serbian).

*Bosnia's Dangerous Tango: Islam and Nationalism*, Europe Briefing N°70, 26 February 2013 (also available in Bosnian).

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*Abkhazia: Deepening Dependence*, Europe Report N°202, 26 February 2010 (also available in Russian).

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*Georgia: Securing a Stable Future*, Europe Briefing N°58, 13 December 2010.

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*The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (I), Ethnicity and Conflict*, Europe Report N°220, 19 October 2012 (also available in Russian).

*The North Caucasus: The Challenges of Integration (II), Islam, the Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency*, Europe Report N°221, 19 October 2012 (also available in Russian).

*Abkhazia: The Long Road to Reconciliation*, Europe Report N°224, 10 April 2013.

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*Cyprus: Bridging the Property Divide*, Europe Report N°210, 9 December 2010 (also available in Greek and Turkish).

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*Aphrodite's Gift: Can Cypriot Gas Power a New Dialogue?*, Europe Report N°216, 2 April 2012 (also available in Greek and Turkish).

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*Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints*, Europe Report N°203, 7 April 2010 (also available in Turkish).

*Turkey's Crises over Israel and Iran*, Europe Report N°208, 8 September 2010 (also available in Turkish).

*Turkey and Greece: Time to Settle the Aegean Dispute*, Europe Briefing N°64, 19 July 2011 (also available in Turkish and Greek).

*Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*, Europe Report N°213, 20 September 2011 (also available in Turkish).

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