Report on Human Rights Violations in the Republic of Adygea ## September 2026

An analysis of open sources for September 2026, including information from human rights organizations, independent media and court proceedings, reveals a persistent pattern of violations of human rights and freedoms by the authorities, security agencies and judicial bodies of the Republic of Adygea. Documented incidents point to a systemic crisis in the penitentiary system, manifested in pervasive censorship, the failure to provide emergency medical care and judicial reductions in compensation for proven abuses in prison. Of particular concern are serious infringements of freedom of conscience (Article 28 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation), the use of "geographical repression" against believers, and the rapid criminalization of citizens' anti-war views through digital entrapment by the security services. Coordinated actions by the security apparatus and regional courts aimed at fabricating serious terrorism charges and concealing information about political trials make it urgently necessary to intensify human rights efforts in the republic.

Former political prisoner Askhabali Alibekov secures judicial recognition of rights violations by the administration of Correctional Colony No. 1, but the court reduces compensation fiftyfold

The Teuchezhsky District Court of the Republic of Adygea partially upheld a claim brought by former political prisoner Askhabali Alibekov, creator of the YouTube channel "Dikiy Desantnik" ("Wild Paratrooper"), against Correctional Colony No. 1 (IK-1), where he served his sentence.

Askhabali Alibekov has faced criminal prosecution on several occasions. His arrests and prison terms relate to the following criminal cases:

1. Case concerning violence against a police officer (current imprisonment)

In February 2024, Alibekov was detained in Kazan, where he was traveling to act as an independent election observer. He was charged under Article 318(1) of the Russian Criminal Code for allegedly making contact with a police officer with his foot during a forceful arrest by security personnel. The blogger himself reported being beaten by the officers who detained him. The court subsequently sentenced him to imprisonment; the appellate court later reduced the sentence to two years in a strict-regime correctional colony. [1-3]

2. Case concerning the "discrediting" of the Russian armed forces (2022-2023)

In autumn 2022, after several administrative fines, Alibekov was charged with repeatedly discrediting the armed forces of the Russian Federation under Article 280.3(1) of the Criminal Code. The charges arose from videos published on his channel containing harsh criticism of Vladimir Putin's policies and anti-war statements. In March 2023, a court in Novorossiysk sentenced him to one year and two months in a strict-regime correctional colony. He served the sentence in full and was released in November 2023. Later, in spring 2024, a cassation court overturned the conviction and remitted the case for reconsideration; the proceedings were ultimately discontinued because the limitation period had expired. [4, 5]

The human rights community, including the independent Memorial project, formally recognized Askhabali Alibekov as a political prisoner, emphasizing that the real reason for the systematic pressure and fabricated criminal cases was his longstanding public opposition activity and blogging. [6, 7]

In September 2026, the court legally acknowledged unlawful actions by the management and staff of the penitentiary institution. However, although the claimant sought one million rubles, the court awarded him only 20,000 rubles in compensation for non-pecuniary damage.

These proceedings are significant for the human rights community: they exposed serious, systemic violations of citizens' rights in places of detention and once again demonstrated the established practice of minimizing judicial compensation in disputes with state bodies.

The trial confirmed that the administration of IK-1 had systematically subjected Alibekov to unlawful pressure and deliberately imposed isolation:

• Violations of the confidentiality of correspondence: Colony staff opened and inspected incoming correspondence from prosecutors' offices without authorization. These actions directly violate the law, since correspondence from supervisory authorities is confidential and must not be censored. The administration's purpose was to exercise unlawful control over the prisoner's complaints.

• Obstruction of personal correspondence: During Alibekov's time in the institution, relatives and supporters sent him more than 300 letters, but only 78 were delivered to him. The remaining correspondence was withheld by censors without lawful grounds.

• Deliberate delays in sending documents: IK-1 staff intentionally delayed the dispatch of official applications and certificates needed by the prisoner's family for up to one month, rendering those documents legally out of date.

The defendant did not dispute that these violations had occurred. The colony's management submitted the findings of an internal investigation to the court, which officially confirmed staff misconduct and stated that those responsible had been subjected to disciplinary action.

In addition to infringements of civil rights, the claimant drew the court's attention to the catastrophic state of medical care in the penitentiary institution. According to Alibekov, IK-1 had no staff physician at all.

As an example of a critical failure to provide care, he cited an incident in which an ambulance team called for a seriously ill prisoner took two hours and 47 minutes to reach the colony. The young man died as a result of the delay. In total, according to the claimant's human rights monitoring, nine prisoners under the age of 50 died during his time in IK-1.

The Teuchezhsky District Court's decision to reduce the award from 100% to 2% of the amount claimed illustrates a profound crisis in the mechanisms for protecting human rights in courts of general jurisdiction:

1. A formal criterion of physical harm: The court justified reducing compensation to 20,000 rubles on the grounds that the claimant had not provided medical records showing a deterioration in his health as a result of the administration's actions. In doing so, it effectively disregarded psychological pressure, deprivation of contact with the outside world and serious affronts to human dignity.

2. Discretion of first-instance judges: Lawyers note that determining compensation for non-pecuniary damage "by eye" remains standard practice. First-instance courts use their discretionary authority to set amounts based on a subjective interpretation of the principles of "reasonableness and fairness." It is extremely difficult to change such an award on appeal: doing so requires proof of an obvious logical or procedural error by the lower-court judge.

Despite the symbolic amount awarded, human rights defenders regard this outcome as an interim victory: the court's recognition of wrongdoing by the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) establishes an important

legal precedent. Askhabali Alibekov and his defense team intend to appeal the compensation award to higher courts, seeking full redress for the non-pecuniary damage suffered. [8]

Human rights monitoring of mortality in penitentiary institutions administered by the FSIN Directorate for the Republic of Adygea faces severe restrictions on access to information. Since 2023, FSIN has almost entirely withheld its departmental medical statistics from publicly available reports. Official data on the number and causes of deaths, broken down by individual regions of the Russian Federation, are no longer published. [9]

Because detailed regional reports from the FSIN Directorate are closed to the public, testimony given by claimant Askhabali Alibekov has become a key source of information about conditions inside the federally administered Correctional Colony No. 1 in the Republic of Adygea.

During the claimant's imprisonment in IK-1, approximately two years including interruptions, nine prisoners were recorded as having died within the institution. All were relatively young or middle-aged: none of the nine deceased prisoners had reached the age of 50. A systemic problem in medical provision, namely the absence of a staff physician, was documented in court. A delay by the emergency services was cited as a direct cause of a death: because the ambulance took two hours and 47 minutes to reach the patient inside the colony, the prisoner died there from an acute medical condition.

To compare regional incidents with the national situation, human rights defenders use estimated indicators from research publications, particularly those of the FSIN Research Institute, and reports by the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Adygea. [9, 10]

According to expert estimates based on FSIN Research Institute studies, diseases of the circulatory system, or cardiovascular conditions, remain the leading cause of death in correctional colonies. The penitentiary sector has recorded exceptionally high mortality from heart disease, reaching 183.6 deaths per 100,000 prisoners. Human rights defenders directly link this to concealed injuries, stress and chronic shortages of medication in colony medical units. [11, 12]

The service's senior management states that nationwide mortality from general illnesses in pretrial detention centers and correctional colonies fell by 9-10% over the past year, citing an overall move toward more humane conditions and a decline in the total prison population. Human rights organizations emphasize, however, that these statements cannot be verified because publicly accessible regional breakdowns are unavailable. [9, 13, 14]

The annual reports of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Adygea record regular appeals from prisoners in local correctional colonies IK-1 and IK-2. Complaints concern inadequate medical care, long waits for transfer to specialized medical correctional institutions in neighboring regions, and delays in medical and social assessments for disability determination. [10]

Human rights defenders point out that the secrecy surrounding data held by the FSIN Directorate for the Republic of Adygea prevents supervisory bodies from responding promptly to disease outbreaks and cases of negligence by medical staff in the region's colonies. [9]

Recommendations for the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

• Submit a request to the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation and FSIN for a comprehensive inspection of IK-1 in the Republic of Adygea, covering the organization of medical care, compliance with the law in handling prisoners' correspondence, and an investigation into the causes of high mortality.

• Support human rights monitoring of court decisions in claims against FSIN, with a view to developing systematic recommendations for courts on fair assessment of non-pecuniary damage suffered in places of detention.

The case of Nikolay Saparov: 4.5 years in prison for his faith, torture during arrest and the geographical displacement of prisoners

On September 22, 2026, Nikolay Saparov, a 44-year-old resident of Maykop, was released from Correctional Colony No. 5 in the settlement of Metallostroy, St. Petersburg. He had served his full sentence in a fabricated criminal case concerning the "organization of the activities of an extremist organization" under Article 282.2(1) of the Russian Criminal Code, brought against him for practicing the Jehovah's Witness faith. In total, Saparov spent 4.5 years in confinement, beginning with his arrest on March 22, 2022. [15]

Nikolay Saparov, a Jehovah's Witness from Maykop, was detained on March 22, 2022, and ultimately sentenced to imprisonment on January 17, 2024.

On the night of March 22-23, 2022, Nikolay was detained with his wife and underage daughter at Mineralnye Vody Airport. He stated that security officers used physical violence and an electric shock device during his arrest. He was immediately taken to a pretrial detention center. [16, 17]

On January 17, 2024, the Maykop City Court found him guilty and sentenced him to six years in a general-regime correctional colony. Credit for his time in pretrial detention, with each day counted as one and a half days in a general-regime colony, reduced the time he actually had to spend in prison. [18]

Nikolay Saparov was prosecuted solely because of his religious beliefs. In 2017, the Russian Supreme Court designated the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia an extremist organization and prohibited its activities. Following this decision, Russian law enforcement agencies began treating peaceful meetings of believers, collective prayer, Bible reading and discussions of religious matters as criminal offenses. [19, 20]

Saparov was charged under Article 282.2(1) of the Criminal Code with organizing the activities of an extremist organization. Investigators alleged that he had "undertaken actions of an organizational nature," consisting of coordinating worship services and holding meetings of believers online. Nikolay himself denied the charge of extremism. [15, 18]

Human rights organizations, including the "Support for Political Prisoners. Memorial" project, recognized Nikolay Saparov as a political prisoner and a prisoner of conscience because he was convicted solely for exercising his right to freedom of religion.

This prosecution and the conditions in which he served his sentence embody key patterns of systemic human rights violations in contemporary Russian law enforcement and penitentiary practice.

1. Fabrication of the case, torture and procedural violations

From the outset, Nikolay Saparov's case was built on serious violations of international human rights standards and criminal procedure law:

• Torture and physical coercion: Following his detention in March 2022, Saparov was subjected to ill-treatment. As he stated in court, security officers beat him, tortured him with an electric shock device and used psychological threats in an attempt to force him to confess. [21]

• Falsification of evidence: Investigative actions involved deliberate procedural violations. In particular, the search of the believer's home took place without independent attesting witnesses. During these actions, investigators "discovered" items in the residence which, according to Saparov and his defense team, did not belong to him and had been planted by security officers. [18]

• Obstruction of personal rights in pretrial detention: During the preliminary investigation, the detention center's administration violated the prisoner's right to communicate with the outside world by deliberately withholding letters from relatives and friends. [22]

2. The geography of imprisonment as a means of pressure on the family

An important aspect of this case is the deliberate aggravation of prison conditions by placing the convicted person far from his permanent home. Although the criminal case was investigated in the Republic of Adygea, in Maykop, Saparov was transferred to IK-5 in Leningrad Region to serve the final part of his sentence. The road distance from Maykop to Metallostroy is between 2,100 and 2,230 kilometers.

This FSIN practice imposes an excessive financial and physical burden on prisoners' family members. In traveling for visits and to deliver food and other supplies, the prisoner's wife, Natalya Saparova, was forced to cover a total of 25,640 kilometers. Human rights institutions characterize this approach as a concealed form of collective punishment of political prisoners' relatives.

3. Systematic disregard for the Russian Supreme Court's legal position

Saparov was prosecuted on charges typical of this category of case: coordinating religious meetings, reciting prayers and participating in collective worship. Convictions for such activities directly contradict the official legal position of Russia's highest court. As early as October 2021, the Plenum of the Russian Supreme Court issued a clear ruling: the collective or individual practice of a religion, and the performance of religious rites and ceremonies, cannot in themselves be classified as participation in, or organization of, the activities of an extremist organization unless they contain actual, proven elements of extremism.

This wording appears in an official document: Resolution No. 32 of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of October 28, 2021, amending Plenum Resolution No. 11 of June 28, 2011, "On Judicial Practice in Criminal Cases Concerning Extremist Offenses." [23]

In practice, law enforcement agencies and courts of general jurisdiction entirely disregard this clarification by the Supreme Court Plenum. Any peaceful religious activity by citizens who identify with a range of movements within different religions is automatically criminalized by investigators, who cite the Supreme Court's 2017 decision to dissolve the denomination's legal entities.

Acquittals under this article remain isolated exceptions, such as the case of Yury Zalipayev in Kabardino-Balkaria in 2020-2021. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the repressive apparatus disregards the protections for freedom of conscience guaranteed by the Russian Constitution.

The criminal prosecution of Nikolay Saparov and similar cases against believers of various faiths in southern Russia constitute a direct infringement of citizens' fundamental constitutional rights. Article 28 of the Russian Constitution guarantees everyone freedom of conscience and religion, including the right to practice a religion individually or together with others and freely disseminate their beliefs. Criminalizing collective prayer and worship directly contradicts this provision, because law enforcement agencies unlawfully equate personal faith with the activities of a legal entity dissolved in 2017. Furthermore, local courts continue to disregard the October 2021 resolution of the Supreme Court Plenum, which explicitly

clarifies that performing religious rites must not in itself be treated as the activity of an extremist organization unless it contains actual elements of extremism. Systematic persecution for peaceful religious practice effectively nullifies constitutional freedoms, turning the right to freedom of conscience into a criminally punishable act.

Against the backdrop of Nikolay Saparov's release, human rights monitoring records persistently high levels of repression against religious minorities in the country's southern regions. According to aggregated information from human rights organizations and specialized monitoring centers, the Russian Federation ranks second in the world in the number of citizens imprisoned for their religious beliefs. Nationwide, approximately 160-170 Jehovah's Witnesses are held at any one time in pretrial detention centers and correctional colonies in cases related to the exercise of freedom of conscience, while the total number of believers of this denomination subjected to criminal prosecution has approached 1,000. [24, 25]

The Southern and North Caucasus Federal Districts have traditionally ranked among the regions with the most intense repression of religious communities.

Since the organization's legal entities were banned in 2017, dozens of believers in the southern macroregion have become defendants in criminal cases concerning "extremist activity." Human rights defenders have verified criminal cases against at least 21 residents of the North Caucasus Federal District and 16 residents of the Southern Federal District. [26, 27]

In addition to Jehovah's Witnesses, a substantial proportion of religious prisoners in southern Russia and Crimea are people prosecuted on charges of involvement in Muslim organizations, notably Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is designated a terrorist organization in Russia but operates legally in most countries worldwide. In these regions, prison terms for religious identity and the collective study of literature range from 10 to 20 years or more, comparable to sentences for serious violent crimes. [28, 29]

The human rights community is particularly concerned about the systematic criminal prosecution of women for their religious views in the Southern and North Caucasus Federal Districts. Contrary to basic principles of humanity, investigating bodies and courts in southern Russia regularly remand elderly women, mothers of several children and women with disabilities into custody, placing them in pretrial detention centers and correctional colonies, although their sole "offense" is peacefully practicing their faith.

Human rights monitoring identifies the following characteristic features of the persecution of women in southern Russia:

• Persecution of elderly believers and women with disabilities: Severe criminal provisions under Article 282.2 of the Russian Criminal Code are applied to women of retirement age or approaching retirement who have serious chronic illnesses. Prolonged detention in remand centers and correctional institutions irreparably damages their health, turning their sentences into a form of slow retribution.

• Mass coordinated searches as psychological pressure: The detention of women in southern Russia is often accompanied by unjustifiably harsh measures by security agencies. Armed, masked officers breaking in at dawn subject women and their underage children to extreme psychological stress, seizing personal diaries, Bibles and family photographs.

• Destruction of family ties: For many female political prisoners, criminal proceedings result in prolonged, forced separation from children and spouses, who are often subjected to parallel criminal prosecution themselves.

Courts in southern Russia impose both custodial sentences and lengthy suspended sentences on women, with stringent restrictions on their liberty that prevent them from properly managing their households, working or visiting medical facilities without special permission from the supervising FSIN authorities. Defending these women in court is made more difficult by the broadly repressive orientation of the region's penitentiary system, which entirely disregards constitutional guarantees of equal human rights and freedoms.

The arrest of blogger Amir Khapachev in Maykop over a questionnaire for the Anti-War Committee and the concealed practice of deleting court press releases

The Maykop City Court of the Republic of Adygea remanded a local resident into a pretrial detention center. Official sources described him as a "popular blogger in the republic," while the case materials identify him only as "Citizen Kh." He is charged under Article 205.5(2) of the Russian Criminal Code with participating in the activities of an organization designated as terrorist in the Russian Federation, an offense carrying a penalty of up to 20 years in prison. The court ordered his detention for one month and 30 days, until November 23. According to information from independent sources and Telegram channels, the person detained is blogger Amir Khapachev. [30, 31]

This legal precedent not only demonstrates an extreme escalation of repression against any expression of an anti-war position in the North Caucasus and Southern Federal Districts, but also exposes the security services' practice of using fake online resources to criminalize citizens' actions. [32, 33]

1. The alleged facts of the case: a digital questionnaire as a form of "terrorist activity"

According to FSB investigators, in September, while in Krasnodar, the accused completed a digital "associate member questionnaire" for the international nongovernmental organization the Anti-War Committee of Russia, which is designated as terrorist in Russia. The blogger forwarded the completed document through Telegram to an "unidentified member of the organization." [30, 34]

The mere act of sending a digital questionnaire through a messaging app formed the basis for a charge under one of the most serious provisions of the Criminal Code. Khapachev's defense asked the court to impose a less restrictive preventive measure, namely house arrest, but the judge rejected the lawyers' arguments and granted the investigators' request for his confinement in a pretrial detention center in full. [31]

2. Entrapment using "fake bots" and the Anti-War Committee's position

A crucial aspect of this criminal case is the strong possibility that the detained activist fell victim to entrapment by security agencies.

After the incident received widespread attention, the consuls of the Anti-War Committee of Russia issued an official emergency statement. The organization stressed that Amir Khapachev had never contacted it and that the questionnaire he completed had not been received in the committee's official database. [35, 36]

Representatives of the anti-war movement explicitly warned the public about an entire network of fake Telegram bots and imitation channels created by Russian security services, which fully reproduce the visual style, logos and structure of independent human rights and opposition projects. [33, 35]

Citizens seeking to express protest or contact human rights defenders enter their personal details into these FSB-controlled bots. The information obtained, including names, telephone numbers and digital

questionnaires, is immediately converted by the security services into an "evidentiary basis" for a criminal case and immediate arrest. [33]

Furthermore, local Telegram channels and media reports contain disturbing information that the blogger was beaten by security officers during his arrest and that, while held in isolation, he is being tortured to force him to confess and incriminate himself. The human rights community insists that independent lawyers must be granted immediate access and that the detainee must undergo a medical examination to document signs of violence. [33]

This case reveals an anomaly in the conduct of the judiciary characteristic of closed political proceedings:

During the day on September 29, the press service of the Maykop City Court of Adygea openly published a detailed press release on its official website announcing the arrest of a "popular blogger in the republic." [31]

Shortly after the publication attracted the attention of independent media outlets, the announcement disappeared entirely and without a trace from the court's official website. At present, the text is available only through copies held in independent web archives and monitoring databases. [32]

This practice of deleting official information indicates attempts to conceal the proceedings from public scrutiny and human rights oversight as soon as inconsistencies in the charges emerged, including the security agencies' use of fake online resources. Restricting access to information on the progress of criminal cases under "terrorism" provisions substantially limits the defense's options and leaves detainees in complete informational isolation within pretrial detention centers.

Conclusion

In September 2026, the human and civil rights situation in the Republic of Adygea was marked by further intensification of repressive pressure on civil society institutions, restrictions on freedom of conscience, and persistent systemic crises in regional penitentiary institutions. Human rights monitoring identified three key negative trends: inadequate judicial protection when prisoners' rights are violated, geographical discrimination against believers, and the criminalization of anti-war views through digital entrapment.

1. A systemic crisis in the penitentiary system: the example of federally administered Correctional Colony No. 1

The judicial precedent established by the Teuchezhsky District Court, which partially upheld former prisoner Askhabali Alibekov's claim against Correctional Colony No. 1 (IK-1), exposed serious internal violations within the service. Pervasive censorship, the deliberate opening of confidential prosecutorial correspondence, and obstruction of prisoners' personal correspondence were officially proven; less than 25% of letters were delivered to the recipient.

Of particular concern is the collapse of medical provision in IK-1, manifested in the absence of staff physicians and critical delays in emergency care. An ambulance response time of two hours and 47 minutes was recorded in a case that resulted in the patient's death. High mortality among young and middle-aged prisoners, with nine deaths of people under 50 during the claimant's sentence, is compounded by the secrecy of the FSIN Directorate's departmental statistics. At the same time, judicial practice demonstrates a formalistic approach to human rights protection: courts of general jurisdiction reduce compensation for non-pecuniary damage fiftyfold, to 20,000 rubles instead of the one million claimed, disregarding the Supreme Court Plenum's explanations that token payments for unlawful actions by state bodies are unacceptable.

2. Religious discrimination and the geography of forced displacement

September 2026 saw the release of Maykop resident Nikolay Saparov, who had served 4.5 years in prison in a fabricated extremism case under Article 282.2(1) of the Criminal Code for being a Jehovah's Witness. This case highlights the systematic disregard by Adygea's courts for Article 28 of the Russian Constitution and the 2021 resolution of the Supreme Court Plenum prohibiting the criminalization of peaceful worship.

"Geographical repression" remains an additional instrument of pressure within the penitentiary system. The transfer of a convicted Maykop resident to IK-5 in Leningrad Region, more than 2,200 kilometers away, imposed a disproportionate financial and physical burden on his family. His wife traveled more than 25,000 kilometers for visits. This is characterized as a concealed form of collective punishment of political prisoners' relatives. Similar repressive pressure, including harsh searches and isolation, continues to be used throughout the Southern and North Caucasus Federal Districts against dozens of believers, including elderly women and people with disabilities.

3. Persecution for anti-war views and the security services' use of digital traps

At the end of the month, the Maykop City Court remanded local blogger Amir Khapachev into a pretrial detention center on charges of participating in a terrorist organization under Article 205.5(2) of the Russian Criminal Code, carrying a penalty of up to 20 years in prison. The grounds were his sending a digital questionnaire to the Anti-War Committee of Russia through Telegram.

This incident revealed a dangerous precedent involving the security agencies' use of fake online resources, including imitation bots, for entrapment and the collection of data on citizens who disagree with the authorities' actions. The proceedings were accompanied by serious violations of the detainee's rights, including reports that security officers had beaten him. The information policy of Adygea's judicial authorities in this case showed signs of manipulation: the official press release announcing the blogger's arrest was concealed and deleted without a trace from the court website immediately after the case attracted the attention of independent human rights monitors.

The human rights situation in the Republic of Adygea in September 2026 demonstrates coordinated action by the law enforcement, penitentiary and judicial systems to minimize citizens' legal safeguards. In practice, the region's courts function not as institutions of justice but as bodies that legitimize the punitive initiatives of security agencies, consistently reducing state bodies' accountability for proven human rights violations and sending activists into pretrial detention on the basis of digital entrapment.

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