

Authorities announce name of Dagestan church shooter; Islamic State claims responsibility

From [Russia Today](#), [Reuters](#)



Authorities in Kizlyar, a town in the Russian North Caucasus region of Dagestan, have identified the man who carried out a shooting attack on a local Orthodox church ..the

Kizlyar mayor's office said in a statement published on its website. "The shooter has been identified as Khalil Khalilov, 22, a resident of the Rassvet settlement located in the Tarumovsky District of Dagestan,"

The shooting happened in the city of Kizlyar, a provincial capital in the Republic of Dagestan. The gunman opened fire with a hunting rifle at a group of people leaving a church ceremony dedicated to the end of the Russian folk festival of Maslenitsa, which marks the start of Lent for Russian Orthodox Christians.

The attacker shouted "Allahu Akbar" [God is great] as he opened fire on worshippers, father Pavel, the church's senior priest, told Russian RBC news portal.

The attack occurred as churchgoers celebrated Maslenitsa, a Christian holiday marking the last day before Lent according

to the eastern Orthodox calendar. An eyewitness to the shooting, Oksana, told RT it happened right in front of a Christian church. The gunman targeted people as they were leaving, but luckily many of the churchgoers managed to take cover inside the building, giving more time for the security guards to respond to the attack.

“There were a lot of people there, moms with little children, elderly people. I believe God saved us, not allowing the man to get inside the church,” the woman said. She added the gunman was killed as he was attempting to flee the scene. (The Authorities) said that Khalilov first tried to break into the church, but when the doors were shut, he opened fire at those who were leaving the service.

The death toll of the attack has risen from four to five people after a woman, who was among those delivered to the hospital, “died on the operation table,” The four fatalities on site were all civilian women leaving the church..The health ministry initially said five people were wounded in the shooting and hospitalized. The interior ministry announced two of them were security personnel who responded to the shooting and gunned down the attacker.

Dagestan’s Muslim Spiritual Authority has called the shooting a “tragedy,” saying that it condemns all manifestations of violence. “We express our most sincere condolences to the relatives of those who were killed or injured,” the Muftiyat said in a statement.It said the perpetrator was an adherent of Wahhabism, a hardline interpretation of Islam.

Islamic State claimed responsibility for the shooting, its news agency Amaq reported, but did not provide immediate evidence for the claim. “A soldier of Islam, Khalil Daghestani, attacked” a church in the town of Kizlyar in Dagestan,” IS said via the Telegram messaging app. “He targeted them with his gun, killing five of them and wounding four others,” it added.

Islamist rebels from the region, which lies immediately east of Chechnya, are known to have travelled to Syria to join IS. In 2015, IS declared it had established a “franchise” in the North Caucasus.

Map from the