

## THE RISE OF NONTRADITIONAL ISLAM IN THE URALS

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There have been significant changes in the composition and distribution of Russia's Muslim community during the era of President Vladimir Putin. In particular, as Islam expands in the Ural Federal District, religious and political life there is evolving. Much of this expansion is due to the arrival of Muslim migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, and some migrants bring with them religious radicalism—a challenge that requires a more effective official response.

### Key Themes

- Islam is expanding across the Russian Federation, particularly on the territory of the Ural Federal District, whose hydrocarbon-rich areas provide more than one-third of Russia's federal budget revenues.
- The ethnic composition of the Ural region is changing as a result of an influx of migrants from Central Asia and the Caucasus, occasionally causing tensions between migrants and locals.
- Most migrants in the Urals are Muslims. Some of them belong to radical Islamist organizations.
- A number of Muslims from the Ural Federal District have participated in terrorist acts in Central Asia and the Caucasus or have gone to fight for the self-proclaimed Islamic State in the Middle East.

### Next Steps for Russia

**Focus on education.** Youth educational programs that involve Muslim intellectuals and scholars can help counteract the growth of religious radicalism. Similarly, increased levels of professionalism and education among traditional Muslim clergy in Russia would enable imams in the Urals to challenge radical narratives and address the concerns of their congregations.

**Organize on-the-job training programs for the clergy, including public speaking classes.** The Russian Federal Migration Service should more actively involve the clergy in working with newly arrived Muslim migrants. Imams and muftis should be encouraged to play a more active role in integrating migrants into local society, to help decrease ethnic and religious tensions.

**Introduce more Muslim-oriented programs and materials through public media outlets, including television, radio, and periodicals.** The public should be informed of charitable work in the Muslim community, Islamic cultural events, the opening of new mosques, and opportunities for interfaith dialogue.

**Adopt stricter migration regulations to stem the poorly controlled influx of migrants.** Russian law enforcement organizations should enhance cooperation with their Central Asian counterparts to prevent known Islamic extremists from entering Russia. The northern areas of the Tyumen region, which hold the bulk of Russia's hydrocarbons and provide more than one-third of federal budget revenues, should be designated as a closed territory to reduce the growth of internal and external migration. This would help reduce interethnic tensions, which continue to increase in the northern Urals.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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