



XII International interreligious youth forum takes place in Dagestan



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On 22nd September 2025 the ceremonial opening of the XII International interreligious youth forum took place in the Karabudakhkent region of Dagestan.

Attending the forum, which takes place annually at the initiative of the archbishop of Makhachkala and Derbent Barlaam and the mufti of Dagestan Ahmad Afandi Abudlaev, were religious ministers, representatives of religious and public organizations from Russia's regions and from abroad, experts on countering the ideologies of extremism and terrorism, and activist young people from Russia's traditional

religious communities.

On behalf of the head of the Republic of Dagestan Sergei Melikov and personally the chairman of the government of Dagestan Abdulmuslim Abdulmuslimov greeted the organizers and guests of the forum.

The archbishop of Makhachkala and Derbent Barlaam and the bishop of Grozny and Suzheny Ambrosius addressed those gathered at the forum.

Greetings were conveyed from the mufti of the Republic of Dagestan Ahmad Afandi by his deputy Muhammed Hadji Magomedov.

The editor-in-chief of the Vatan newspaper Moisei Avrumov spoke on behalf of the Jewish community of Dagestan.

The opening ceremony was conducted by Muhammed Hadji Magomedov, head of the coordinating centre for formulating an active civil position among young people, averting international and interconfessional conflict and preventing terrorism at the State University of Dagestan.

As part of the forum conferences, seminars, round tables and meetings between religious ministers and experts from students of both higher and intermediary study institutions were organized.

On 23rd September at the Gamzatov Dagestan State Pedagogical University the deputy chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism abbot John (Rubin) spoke. Father John noted the high level of interest and the willingness of students from the Pedagogical University for constructive dialogue on relevant issues of interreligious and international accord, emphasizing that it was the young generation that are the key link in building a future based on peace and mutual

understanding between the representatives of Russia's various religions.

Bishop Ambrosius, the guests from Moscow and Russia's regions, Georgia and Serbia prayed in the Dormition Cathedral.

Archbishop Barlaam spoke to the guests on the history of the church, the tragic events of June 2024 and on the preparations for the forthcoming 120th anniversary of the consecration of the cathedral.

On 24th September the forum continued its work in Derbent, Russia's oldest city.

At the Lezgian Suleiman Stalsky Music and Drama Theatre a plenary session was held of the All-Russian scholarly and practical conference called 'The Unity of Traditions and Innovations: Religion, Digital Security and Possible Solutions in the Fight against Terrorism'.

In his presentation hieromonk Gregory (Matrusov), chairman of the expert council for interaction with the Islamic world, shared his thoughts on the understanding of the Word of God in Christianity and Islam, as well as the variety of religious experience of humankind and the confession of faith in the One God the world's traditional religions. In conclusion, Father Gregory called upon the young people gathered in the hall to "rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5.16-18).

On the same day the forum participants visited the ancient Djin mosque, the oldest in Russia, the Kele Numaz historical synagogue and the Church of the Intercession of the Virgin Mary, where the guests were met by the church rector Father Mikhail Lobov.

They learnt of how the synagogue and the church were being restored after the terrorist act of 23rd June

2024 and paid homage to archpriest Nikolai Kotelnikov, the oldest cleric of the Makhachkala diocese, who was killed that day. For forty-five years he had served in the parish at Derbent.

A short memorial service was held at Father Nikolai's grave by Father Mikhail Lobov and the clergy who were attending the forum archimandrite Luke (Babić) from the Serbian Orthodox Church, Abbot John (Rubin), archimandrite Macarius (Lyubavtsev), archpriest Ioann Bondarenko from the Georgian Orthodox Church, Father Sergei Abasov and deacon Alexander Lenschmidt. Prayers were offered in three languages – Church Slavonic, Serbian and Georgian.

The trip was rounded off with a visit to the citadel of Naryn-kal, an outstanding world-renowned monument.

In the evening a round table was held at the Caspian Sanatorium on the topic of the patriotic activities of religious organizations in the USSR during the Great Patriotic War.

On 25th September the XII International and interreligious youth forum came to a close.

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