

# Moscow underground bombings linked to crisis in North Caucasus

Niall Green  
7 April 2010

On Tuesday, Russian investigators identified the second Moscow metro suicide bomber, who blew herself up at the Lubyanka station, as Mariam Sharipova. Born in 1982, Sharipova reportedly was the wife of Magomedali Vagapov, an alleged Islamist separatist militant from the Russian Caucasus republic of Dagestan, whose whereabouts are unknown.

Sharipova's father told the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper that her two brothers had previously been detained by police and that the elder, Anvar, had been tortured.

The other female suicide bomber in the March 29 attacks had already been named as 17-year-old Dzhennet Abdurakhmanova, the widow of an Islamist militant who had been killed by Russian forces in December of last year.

The attacks on the Lubyanka and Park Kultury metro stations killed 40 people and left more than 80 injured. The group "Emirate of the Caucasus", which seeks the secession of the Muslim-majority republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan from the Russian Federation, has claimed responsibility for the bombings.

Two further terrorist attacks took place April 1, when 12 people, including a senior police official, were killed in two bombings in Dagestan. A car bomb went off outside the local interior ministry office in the town of Kizlyar, followed by a suicide bombing at the scene 20 minutes later, which killed officers and members of a crowd that had gathered. Twenty-three others were injured.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev have suggested that the double bombings in Dagestan and the attacks in Moscow were carried out by the same group.

The Emirate of the Caucasus group, also known as

the Caucasus Mujahadeen, led by Chechen fighter Doku Umarov, has sent out mixed signals of its responsibility for the metro attack. Its spokesman Shemsettin Batukaev initially told media, "We did not carry out the attack in Moscow, and we don't know who did it". However, in a video message posted March 31, Umarov claimed responsibility for ordering the attack on the metro system.

He claimed that the attack was in revenge for the killing of civilians by Russian forces in the village of Arshty, Ingushetia. Umarov, whose identity could not be conclusively confirmed from the video message claiming responsibility for the Moscow blasts, has been one of the leading Islamist separatist militants since the 1990s.

Last year Medvedev claimed that security forces had killed Umarov and that his group had been defeated. At that time the Russian president claimed that "counter-terrorism operations" in the region had come to an end.

Umarov also claimed responsibility for a train bombing on the Moscow-St. Petersburg line last year that killed 26 people, including a number of government officials.

Russian military and police forces have waged two brutal wars in Chechnya since 1994 that have claimed the lives of an estimated 100,000 people and left much of the republic in ashes. Separatists in Muslim-majority Chechnya declared independence during the dissolution of the USSR. They maintained a de facto independent state after repulsing an initial attempt by Russian President Boris Yeltsin to regain control of the territory.

Yeltsin re-launched a full-scale invasion of Chechnya in 1994, beginning a war that saw the Russian armed forces level most of the republic. Following the withdrawal of Russian forces in 1996, a tentative deal

was struck in 1997 in which Chechnya was granted de facto independence.

A second war broke out in 1999, with the Russian government using a series of apartment bombings to justify the assault. While the Kremlin claimed at that time that Chechen militants were behind the explosions, which killed almost 300 people, it is commonly accepted that the Russian security agency, the FSB, had a hand in the attacks.

The conflict in Chechnya has spread to the neighbouring provinces and, despite the official cessation of hostilities, Russian state forces remain very active in the region, waging a low-level war against the separatists and committing atrocities against the civilian population.

The violence continued this week when a suicide bomber killed two police officers in Karabulak, Ingushetia. Another two officers were taken to hospital.

Over the past two years the three North Caucasus provinces have experienced a rise in violence, with almost daily reports of killings, assaults, and kidnappings carried out by police, militias—either separatist or allied to local government officials—and Russian forces. Scores of people “disappear” each year, many later discovered tortured or murdered.

Most commentators recognize that the Islamist insurgency in the region is growing, despite Kremlin claims that it is limited to a few hundred isolated fighters in the most remote areas of the Caucasus Mountains.

The desperate social conditions in these impoverished provinces—including mass unemployment and a lack of access to basic services—as well as the brutality of the security forces has driven more youth towards the separatist groups, who espouse the most reactionary interpretation of Sharia Islamic law as well as independence from Moscow.

The newspaper *Kommersant* quoted a security source saying that officials believed that Islamist groups in the region had recently recruited 30 people to carry out suicide bombings.

The Russian state has used the twin bombing to ramp up attacks in the North Caucasus region and push for further anti-democratic measures across Russia. Putin has led the bloodthirsty calls for revenge, demanding that security forces “destroy” all terrorists and “scrape the sewers” for those responsible for the Moscow

attacks.

Visiting Dagestan two days after the Moscow bombings, Medvedev, accompanied by senior officials, said, “We must deal sharp dagger blows to the terrorists to destroy them and their lairs.”

“The list of measures to fight terrorism must be widened,” Medvedev stated in a call for the government to assume even more authoritarian powers. “They must not only be effective but tough, severe and preventative. We need to punish,” the president continued.

Several senior officials have called for the introduction of a biometric database of all people in the Russian Federation, and an expansion of security operations in the North Caucasus republics and across Russia.

Robert Shlegel, a delegate in Russia’s lower house of parliament, the State Duma, proposed legislation Tuesday to restrict media coverage of “extremist” groups. “In my opinion,” said Shlegel, of the pro-Kremlin United Russia party, “news about militants should be reduced to reports about their annihilation.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**