

# Syrian Rebels Urge North Caucasus Jihadists to Stay Home

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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North Caucasus Islamists looking to join the holy war should do so in Russia and not in Syria, possibly targeting the Sochi Olympics, according to a video message attributed to a Syrian jihadist warlord.

The six-minute message in Russian is delivered by a man identified as Salakhuddin, the leader of a group called az Zubair, which has not previously made any headlines.

The speaker appears in a wheelchair in front of a laptop, wearing a T-shirt bearing the name of the Russian Islamist group Caucasus Emirate and surrounded by armed men in masks and fatigues.

In the video, dated Tuesday and available on YouTube, Salakhuddin addresses the "huge inflow of volunteers" coming from Russia to Syria to join Islamists fighting the regime of President Bashar Assad, saying that "it is not quite right" to leave one jihad zone — such as

"our Caucasus" — for another.

Jihad in Russia should be continued and taken to Russian cities outside the North Caucasus, including Moscow, Salakhuddin said.

"Prepare for the so-called Olympic Games in Sochi," he said, adding that the 2014 Winter Games in Russia have been named as a target for jihadists by Caucasus Emirate leader Doku Umarov.

Russian authorities had not commented on the statement as of Thursday. They have repeatedly pledged to prevent any terrorist attacks during the Olympics, set for next February.

Russia fought two wars with increasingly Islamized separatists in the country's southern republic of Chechnya in recent decades and is still battling a resilient jihadist insurgency in the North Caucasus.

Russian Islamists have been reported since last summer to be joining the bloody two-year-long standoff in Syria, which so far has cost 100,000 lives, according to the UN.

An EU-based spokesman for a Chechen rebel group put the number of North Caucasus fighters in Syria at "above 100" in an interview with Kommersant daily last week. Syrian rebel group Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (Army of Emigrants and Helpers), which is estimated to have about 1,000 troops, is led by an ethnic Chechen and runs a Russian-language YouTube channel.

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