

First President of Russia's Bashkortostan Murtaza Rakhimov Dies at 88

January 12, 2023



Murtaza Rakhimov. **Maxim Shemetov / TASS**

Murtaza Rakhimov, the first president of Russia's republic of Bashkortostan, died at age 88 on Wednesday in the region's capital Ufa after a prolonged illness, Bashkortostan's current head Radiy Khabirov [announced](#).

A village boy from Bashkortostan's southwestern Kugarchinsky district, Rakhimov built a successful career in the region's thriving oil refining industry before being elected the head of the Bashkir ASSR's Supreme Soviet, the republic's key governing body, in 1990.

Under Rakhimov's leadership, Bashkortostan declared state sovereignty in 1990, making him one of the key figures of the so-called parade of sovereignties epoch when Soviet republics proclaimed various degrees of independence from Moscow.

Rakhimov was elected the first president of the resource-rich republic in 1993 and governed

the region with an iron fist until his dismissal by then-President Dmitry Medvedev in 2010.

Embed:

13 января в Уфе началась церемония прощания с первым президентом Башкирии Муртазой Губайдулловичем Рахимовым. Она проходила в закрытом формате.

Проводить политика в последний путь прилетел Владимир Путин - он возложил цветы к гробу.

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Rakhimov's presidency, marked by his widespread popularity among rural residents of the region but also omnipresent corruption and ethnic-based nepotism, left a conflicting legacy. His love for participating in opening ceremonies of new infrastructure projects earned him the nickname "can opener," though loyal supporters affectionately called Rakhimov *babay* — "grandfather" in his native Bashkir language.

"Murtaza Gubaidulovich is gone. We bow our heads before the great son of the Bashkir people, who devoted himself entirely to serving the republic and Russia," Bashkortostan's current head and Rakhimov's former aide Radiy Khabirov [wrote](#) in his official Telegram channel Wednesday.

Rostislav Murzagulov, Rakhimov's press secretary turned opposition politician who wrote a best-selling memoir about the regional president, [commented](#) on his former boss' passing by noting that Bashkortostan's ex-leader "will have a difficult conversation with the Almighty."

Russian President Vladimir Putin traveled to Ufa to attend Rakhimov's farewell ceremony on Friday, which was broadcast live on all regional television channels.

"We are saying goodbye to the first leader of the republic, Murtaza Gubaidullovich, whom I knew well personally. We had a good relationship," Putin said at a post-ceremony meeting with current regional head Khabirov.

"He made a significant contribution to the development of the republic...and without exaggeration played an important stabilizing role during a critical period in Russian history," Putin added, referencing Rakhimov's decision to keep the republic within the Russian Federation.

Rakhimov will be buried in Ufa's historic Mohammedan Muslim cemetery.

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