



## Research Article

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# Changes to the System for Preventing the Spread of Religious Extremism to Improve the Efficiency of the Penitentiary System: Experience of the Kazakhstan

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## Abstract

*The study focuses on understanding the opportunities to improve the prevention of religious extremism in penitentiary institutions. Analysis of factors in the spread of religious extremism and measures of its prevention not only raises the efficiency of a country's penitentiary system but promotes the stability of social relations and increases the security of the population. The goal of the study is to propose directions for the improvement of the religious extremism prevention system to enhance the efficiency of a country's penitentiary system. The study examines the features of the dissemination of extremism and terrorism and explores the penitentiary practice of detention of persons convicted of extremist crimes in the Republic of Kazakhstan. According to the results of the expert survey, factors in the spread of religious extremism in Kazakhstan's penitentiary system are identified and recommendations for possible measures to prevent them are offered. The authors argue that such prevention should strengthen interaction with religious departments and public organizations dealing with religious extremism, introduce international programs into the work of penitentiary employees, include training in special programs of psychologists and theologians, involve authoritative representatives of the clergy, and introduce the institution of chaplains. The presented theoretical and practical recommendations will enable government agencies to curb the spread of religious extremism in penitentiary institutions.*

**Keywords:** *religious extremism, penitentiary system, extremist crimes, places of detention, penitentiary system institutions, religious extremists*

## 1. Introduction

In the late 20th and early 21st century, the world faced a rise in extremism and terrorism, being completely unprepared either for the practical fight (Siranashvili, 2018) against these social

phenomena or for their theoretical comprehension (Vlasov, 2003).

According to S.S. Oganessian (2015), religious extremism, the social base of which is typically formed by marginalized segments of society, presents, in a general case, intolerance for members of one's own or other religions. It is characterized by extreme interpretations of religious doctrine and methods of action to spread its views and aims to destroy social relations. In extreme forms, religious extremism turns into terrorism – behavior aimed at pushing the limits of the permissible, deliberately inflicting harm, and causing a destructive impact that threatens the existence of people, society, and nature (Sundiev, Smirnov, Kundetov, & Fedorov, 2014). Thus, religious extremist activity and religious terrorist activity relate to each other as a genus and species.

In this work, we proceed from an understanding of the manifestations of extremism as people's adherence to certain attitudes and methods (mostly in politics) (Vlasov, 2003), provocation of mass unrest and civil disobedience (Siranashvili, 2018), and terrorist actions and guerrilla warfare methods (Kazantsev & Gusev, 2017). Extremists are people whose behavior is guided by destructive religious ideology and manifests as crimes of extremist or terrorist orientation (Gribanova & Karatueva, 2022; Khlebushkin, Krainova, Agapov, & Radoshnova, 2021).

Violence is a key concept in the structure of extremism and terrorism. It is reflected in ideas, behavior, and acts (Zelenkov et al., 2021). The idea of violence as a key or sole method to achieve abstract goals, for example, the establishment of a caliphate where justice will reign (Haswa, Nemer, Abdallahi, & Alhourani, 2023), is gradually becoming the core value of radicalism (Farida, Ansusa Putra, Wardani, Kasdi, & Mujibatun, 2022). One could say that violence is elevated to a cult. Moreover, the cult of violence subordinates other values and ideals, the observance of which is obligatory in traditional religions (Zelenkov et al., 2022).

For instance, terrorists easily disregard Islam's prohibition against the use of drugs that are harmful to the body when carrying out terrorist attacks, because violence is the highest value according to their beliefs (Borichev, Radchenko, Moiseeva, & Chasovnikova, 2022).

For this reason, one of the conditions for improving the quality of resocialization of individuals convicted of extremism is the structure of rehabilitation, specifically the involvement of two processes in it – deradicalization (change of ideas and values) and rejection of violence (behavioral change). A special part of the solution to this problem by modern states is taken by the penitentiary system.

Therefore, the paper places a special emphasis on studying the effects of the penitentiary system on the prevention of the spread of religious extremism. The first reason for this is that, according to E.F. Naruslanov (2017) and I.A. Seleznev (2017), extremism is common to all religions, but the so-called pseudo-Islamic extremism based on ideas of political Islam (Islamism), jihadism, and Caliphate has become a threat to the entire modern world. Secondly, researchers (Oganessian, Ushkov, Godovanets, & Gabaraev, 2016; Rumiantsev, 2019; Zheltov, 2016) are particularly concerned about the spread of religious extremism in the prison systems of post-Soviet states, including Kazakhstan (Kaliyev, Kenzhegulov, Byerdimurat, & Akhmetova, 2023).

## 2. Factors Contributing to the Spread of Religious Extremism

This section presents a more detailed examination of the factors that promote the dissemination of religious extremism in general. The leading place among these is taken by previous antisocial or illegal activity, family influences (Zhunussova, 2022), and religious factors (Togaibayeva et al., 2021).

Religious extremist crimes are typically preceded by prolonged antisocial or illegal activity. In the overwhelming majority of cases, this category of convicts does not repent, retain a high degree of willingness to commit a new crime, and do not think about the consequences (Chaikovskii, 2019).

Researchers also believe that family is not a disincentive in this situation. This is explained by the following circumstances. First, parents may share the extremist religious views of their children and see nothing wrong with their actions, lamenting only the fact of them being prosecuted (Kozin, 2019). Second, parents may not be an authority over their children and be unable to control their

behavior or find rapport with them (Iavorskii, 2012). The final factor is the destruction and marginalization of family relationships (Khruleva & Maelova, 2018).

High religious tolerance is not found in the various extremist religious groups (those that consider their religion the only true one and the followers of other religions as enemies) (Oganesian, Gabaraev, Godovanets, Kazberov, & Ushkov, 2017). The spiritual factors of religious extremism may be considered: the growth of universal religiosity; the functions of religion in social integration and stability (Zabolotskaia et al., 2021); the sacralization of spiritual values; diminishing trust in traditional religious institutions, especially the supernatural concepts they offer; passivity of traditional religious institutions; liberalization of the country's social life (Iavorskii, 2016).

Several studies (Bakulina, Khalilov, & Mustafina, 2016; Oganesian & Mikhailov, 2018; Tspilev, 2018) also point out that the penitentiary system becomes the place of dissemination of Islamic religious extremism and there are many opportunities for extremists serving sentences for crimes to negatively influence other convicts. As a rule, those convicted of extremist crimes rarely give up their views and, in fact, introduce to them persons convicted of other crimes (Maistrenko, 2018).

Research suggests that in the post-Soviet space, some places of detention turn into the so-called "green zones", meaning penitentiary institutions informally controlled by religious extremists (Usmanov & Zinnurov, 2019).

For this reason, our study aims to investigate opportunities and methods of rehabilitation work with convicts in penitentiary institutions. In the face of terrorism and extremism becoming the main threat to national security, it is vital for governments (especially of countries in Central and South-East Asia) to restore stability and security by developing rehabilitation programs for prisoners and programs to engage radicalized individuals in public life.

### 3. Forms and Mechanisms for the Rehabilitation of Prisoners

In the context of the research problem, we believe it to be most important to study the experience of Asian regions. In Kazakhstan, same as in other countries in Central Asia, committing extremist crimes of a religious nature is punished by imprisonment. However, despite being a rather small group, these convicts are a very aggressive part of the criminal environment that is most negatively disposed to correctional influence and does not accept the social values of modern society. A high concentration of such prisoners creates the risk of various violations of human rights and causes excessive cruelty, abuse of power by prison officers, as well as the excessive militarization of the penal system. In Central Asian countries such as Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, criminal codes have no mention of convicts serving sentences for extremist crimes and their time in imprisonment. On the one hand, the Republic of Kazakhstan has realized the importance of rehabilitating people convicted of crimes in the sphere of religious extremism, particularly those committed under the influence of radical Islamic organizations (Kornilova, Mamedov, Karabayev, Khorovetskaya, & Lapteva, 2022). The country has established legal institutes for the execution of sentences of religious extremists. On the other hand, the forms and mechanisms of rehabilitation of prisoners depend on national specifics, the capabilities of the country, and the resources it possesses. All countries in South-Eastern Asia that had suffered from terrorism have managed to develop opportunities for the rehabilitation of convicts. Malaysia and Singapore have developed complex and structured programs, while Indonesia and the Philippines have created ad hoc and unstructured programs (Aslam, Bin, Othman, & Rosili, 2016). Although opportunities vary from country to country, R. Gunaratna (2021) identifies ten regimes of rehabilitation. These include religious; social and family; educational; vocational; entrepreneurial; cultural; financial; creative arts; recreational; and psychological rehabilitation.

In Kazakhstan specifically, all measures within theological rehabilitation work with convicts in penitentiary institutions can be roughly categorized into the following forms:

1. enlightening and educational measures: lectures and classes with theologians, showing propaganda and counter-propaganda films, studying literature, receiving education, and engaging in social and cultural activities (Kotovchikhina et al., 2022);

2. control and censorship measures: inspection of literature received and available in the institutions of the penitentiary system for possible signs of propaganda of religious extremism and terrorism ideologies and destructive religious movements;
3. psychological measures: psychological training aimed at correcting the personality and changing attitudes.

The theological rehabilitation work conducted in Kazakhstan can also be distinguished into internal and external. Internal work involves work with convicted extremists and terrorists immediately in penitentiary facilities (enlightenment, psychological, and control and censorship measures), while external work implies the search for and selection of literature, methodological support and involvement of experienced theologians, work with the relatives of convicted extremists, including social and financial assistance provided by local executive authorities.

Accordingly, the staff of the penitentiary system is offered opportunities to exercise a creative approach. This means that the correction of a convicted extremist may be achieved by measures not specified in the instruction to the employee, but not contrary to the current legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Thus, we are dealing with a significant social, legal, and strategic issue, which lies in searching for opportunities, forms, and content of the creative approach to rehabilitation work in the Republic of Kazakhstan. We propose to use the methodological approach applied, in particular, in studies on religious extremism (Dieu, Testouri, & Sorel, 2019) and determine four questions to ask professionals working with religious extremists: 1) what forms and mechanisms to prevent religious extremism are needed?; 2) what needs to be done to implement them?; 3) what are the reasons and purpose behind the need for these forms and mechanisms to prevent religious extremism?; 4) how to accomplish this?

The above demonstrates that the attempt to find the optimal form and mechanism for the prevention of religious extremism specifically in the conditions of Kazakhstan's penitentiary system presents a topical objective.

The purpose of the present study is to identify opportunities to influence the prevention of religious extremism spreading in the Republic of Kazakhstan by means of the penal system.

Research objectives:

1. to study the crime levels and the features of penitentiary practices in the confinement of convicted extremist offenders in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
2. to determine factors in the spread of religious extremism in Kazakhstan's penal system;
3. to produce recommendations regarding possible measures for the prevention of religious extremism spreading in the penitentiary system of Kazakhstan.

#### 4. Methods

To achieve the purpose of the study and solve research objectives, in the period from January 15 to May 1, 2022, a qualitative study was conducted on the opportunities to change the system for the prevention of religious extremism spreading in penitentiary institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The study was conducted in three stages:

Stage 1 – analysis of the penitentiary practice of incarceration of convicted extremist offenders in the Republic of Kazakhstan (based on the analysis of the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan and statistical data);

Stage 2 – identification of factors contributing to the dissemination of religious extremism in places of deprivation of liberty and the experience of work with prisoners. This stage included three expert surveys: an online survey of psychologists working with radical extremists; in-person interviews of inspectors in the organization of theological work in penal institutions; an e-mail expert survey of senior officials of penal institutions and academics with academic interests related to the rehabilitation of religious extremists);

Stage 3 – determining the main directions of work of the penitentiary system and the associated

necessary measures to prevent the spread of religious extremism (based on the results of the first and second stages of research).

The study utilized the following research methods:

- Analysis of scientific literature on the essence, prevalence, and legal regulation of religious extremism, particularly in the penal system. Criteria for the selection of sources were the authors' research interests, the topic of the publication, and the credibility of the publisher;
- An online survey of psychologists. The survey involved 20 psychologists from institutions in all regions of Kazakhstan who worked with religious extremists.

The survey of psychologists presented 10 questions compiled in accordance with UN recommendations (United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016). The study proceeded from the position that an efficient deradicalization process is defined by changes in six areas: social relations, psychophysiological adaptation, identity, ideology, orientation of activities, and eliminating illusions.

- A questioning of inspectors in the organization of theological rehabilitation work. The survey was conducted on 113 employees from all regions of Kazakhstan. The inspectors were asked to rate the reasons inhibiting theological rehabilitation work, the most efficient methods of resocialization of people convicted of extremist crimes, the role of public authorities in the deradicalization program, international experience in deradicalization, and the problems that may cause the recurrence of extremist crimes after the release of prisoners.
- An expert survey of senior officials of penal institutions and academics with academic interests related to the rehabilitation of religious extremists.

This expert survey was conducted via an e-mail service. The e-mails contained two open questions: "What are the main factors for the spread of religious extremism in prisons?" and "What are the main activities of the penitentiary system and related measures needed to prevent the spread of religious extremism?". The questions were sent to 54 experts, who were senior officials of the penitentiary system, scientist-researchers, and employees of the Kostanay Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan named after Sh. Kabyibaev, as well as the Penitentiary System Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The letter requested free-form justifications for the answers sent within two weeks.

Criteria for the selection of experts included no less than 8 years of experience working in the penitentiary system in senior positions or at least two scientific publications on the problem under study. Responses were received from 49 experts, and only the responses suitable for further analysis were considered. We considered "factors for the spread of religious extremism in prisons" and "main activities of the penitentiary system and related measures needed to prevent the spread of religious extremism" with more than 50% of the expert mentions.

All participants in the expert surveys were informed of the goals of the survey and the intention of its organizers to publish the results in a summarized form.

The expert opinions were then ranked, and their consistency was tested using the SPSS software product by Kendall's concordance coefficient (W):

$$W = 12S/n^2(m^3-m)$$

where S is the sum of squared deviations of all rank estimates of each of the analyzed indicators from the mean value; n – the number of experts; m – the number of analyzed indicators.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Crime rates and Penitentiary Practices of Imprisonment of Persons Convicted of Extremist Crimes in the Republic of Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan's law enforcement practice, an expanded definition of "extremism" is given in Law No. 31-III "On Countering Extremism" (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2005), including separate definitions of political, national, and religious extremism. The latter, according to Article 1 of

this Law, refers to "inciting religious enmity or discord, including those involving violence or calls to violence, as well as any religious practices that endanger the safety, life, health, morals, or rights and freedoms of citizens". The Criminal Code of Kazakhstan (Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2014) legally specifies offenses under Articles 174, 179-182, 184, 258-260, 267, 404 (parts 2 and 3), and 405 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

According to N. Ryshichkin (2018), as applied to our study, the Criminal Code offers a more precise definition of extremism, including religious extremism, because it is closely connected to the operation of the penal system that is deeply immersed in the system of both criminal procedure and criminal law, and serves as a tool for both determining punishment and preventing crime (Oganessian et al., 2016).

Until recently, Kazakhstan had been the most prosperous state of Central Asia in the post-Soviet space in terms of the spread of religious extremism. This is owed to the stable state of the economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the high modernization of Kazakhstan's society in the Soviet times, a major share of the Russian population (Lukpanov, 2012), as well as the country's historical past associated with the dissemination of Islam in the nomadic culture that traditionally peacefully coexisted with other religions and cultures and was not conducive to the functioning of classical religious institutions. Furthermore, the role of Islam was considerably reduced in the Soviet period (Lukpanov, 2012).

Kazakhstan's attainment of independence led to a religious revival and an increase in the sociopolitical prestige (Ryzhichkin, 2018) and authority of religions, especially Islam (Poliakov, 2014). However, there emerged problems relating to the proliferation of small religious groups (Maulsharif & Bazarkulova, 2013) that were not always law-abiding. Furthermore, research notes the emergence of a trend of criminalization of religious extremists (Maulsharif & Bazarkulova, 2013), as well as, in turn, the religious radicalization of traditional offenders, which was especially prominent in Western Kazakhstan. Despite this, the year 2021, preceding the attempted coup, was marked by a noticeable reduction in the number of offenses related to extremism and terrorism (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Recorded criminal offenses related to extremism and terrorism (Elorda.Info, 2022)

Recorded criminal offenses related to extremism and terrorism. January-December 2021 (pcs.)			
	2021/12	2022/12	Annual growth
Total	192	208	-7.7%
Advocacy of terrorism or public incitement to commit an act of terrorism (Art. 256)	61	49	24.5%
Inciting social, national, tribal, racial, class, or religious discord (Art. 174)	58	57	1.8%
Organization and participation in the activity of a public or religious association or other organization after a court decision to prohibit their activities or liquidate in connection with their extremism or terrorism (Art. 405)	50	63	-20.6%
Financing of terrorist or extremist activities and other assistance to terrorism or extremism (Art. 258)	7	9	-22.2%
Creation, management of a terrorist group and participation in its activity (Art. 257)	5	9	-44.4%
Recruiting or training or arming people to organize terrorist or extremist activities (Art. 259)	5	7	-28.6%
Separatist activities (Art. 180)	2	-	-
Act of terrorism (Art. 255)	2	6	-66.7%
Propaganda or public calls for seizure or retention of power, as well as seizure or retention of power or forcible change of the constitutional order of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Art. 179)	1	2	-50.0%
Creation, management of an extremist group and participation in its activity (Art. 182)	1	3	-66.7%
Undergoing terrorist or extremist training (Art. 260)	-	2	-
Hostage-taking (Art. 261)	-	1	-

Statistical data suggest that the most common age of persons convicted of extremist offenses is between 18 and 38 (Petrianin, 2013). The surveyed experts state that these prisoners are typically held separately from the general prison population and are grouped according to their views and ethnonational and religious affiliation. As a rule, such groups try to find funding for their activities



and plan various activities both during their stay in the penitentiary system and after their release (Rumiantsev & Naruelanov, 2019). These groups also carry out covert activities to introduce and promote their extremist views, attracting new adherents (Gnedov, 2014) from among both inmates to attract them to various branches of radical Islam and make them enter illegal armed groups upon release and employees of penal institutions from among newly hired young people, as they are especially valuable due to their high level of skill in using weapons and combat, coupled with physical training.

Persons convicted of extremist crimes are subject to provisions of the Criminal Corrections Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan such as the right to recognition of human dignity, protection from torture, violence, and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment to the same extent as other convicted persons. This obliges the executives of penal institutions to guarantee them the treatment that rules out torture and other forms of cruelty and degradation of human dignity (Magda, 2008).

Convicted extremists are subject to certain obligations, and there may be conflicts between inmates and the administration due to, for example, the practice of religious rites by inmates, which must be performed in accordance with the internal regulations of the institution.

The Criminal Corrections Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan does not provide special norms regulating the legal status of persons convicted of extremist offenses of a religious nature. However, the Code recognizes them as quite a significant danger to society, which reflects on the conditions of accommodation and detention in the penitentiary system.

A major restriction in the detention of convicted extremists in Kazakhstan is the prohibition on their transfer to facilities with more lenient conditions of detention regardless of the level of their correction and the prohibition of their exit from the penal facility for critical family reasons.

The state, in dealing with those convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes, establishes collective responsibility like for no other crime. Theological rehabilitation work is organized and carried out by specialized divisions in penal correction facilities, specialized bodies in interaction with local executive authorities, and non-governmental organizations operating in the sphere of religion. This expansion of the subjects of rehabilitation owes to the social danger of extremist and terrorist offenses.

Our analysis demonstrates that local executive authorities play a key role in many aspects of prevention and the rehabilitation of convicts. First, individual rehabilitation programs are coordinated and implemented with local executive bodies. Second, these authorities ensure the involvement of theologians and work on theological rehabilitation, as well as the prevention of religious extremism, and carry out diagnostics to determine the level of radicalism and the risks of radicalization. Third, local authorities monitor the information environment and provide educational assistance to prisoners. Fourth, they are the ones working with the families of individuals convicted of extremism and terrorism.

## 5.2 Factors Contributing to the Spread of Religious Extremism in Prisons

Based on the expert survey, various groups of factors related to the functioning of the penitentiary system, the work of staff, and the behavior of inmates were investigated. Table 2 presents the main factors related to the spread of religious extremism in places of deprivation of liberty. Based on the focus of the study, we detail the results related to the work of staff in the penitentiary system and the methods of work on the prevention of religious extremism among inmates.

**Table 2:** Factors contributing to the spread of religious extremism in prisons

Factor group	Factor	%*	Rank
Related to the penitentiary system	Corruption	89.8%	1
	Territorial location of places of detention entailing the diversity of prisoners on religious and ethnic grounds	77.6%	2
	Poor interaction between penitentiary system staff and law enforcement agencies	71.4%	3
	Similarities between the religious extremist culture and prison subculture	67.3%	4

Factor group	Factor	%*	Rank
Related to personnel	Insufficient knowledge of religious extremist ideology, methods of work, and international experience among penitentiary system staff	85.7%	1
	Religious extremists pressuring the administration of the penitentiary system by manipulating the rights of believers	75.5%	2
Related to convicts	Presence of persons convicted of extremist religiously-motivated crimes in correctional facilities	93.9%	1
	Extremist literature entering places of detention	89.8%	2
	Increase in the number of neophytes	81.6%	3
	Persons convicted of extremist religiously-motivated crimes using telecommunications equipment	65.3%	4
	Third-party funding that allows religious extremists to indoctrinate and support possible followers financially	63.3%	5

Note: compiled on the basis of the expert survey; \* - percentage of expert mentions; concordance coefficient  $W = 0.77$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong consistency of expert opinions

Then we identified the key directions of work of the penitentiary system to prevent the spread of religious extremism (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Key directions associated with the work of penitentiary system staff to prevent the spread of religious extremism

No.	Direction of work	%*	Rank
1	Recruitment and training of penitentiary system staff	85.7%	1
2	Development of methods to counter religious extremist propaganda in places of detention	81.6%	2
3	Restriction of possible external influence on imprisoned religious extremists	79.6%	3
4	Prevention of religious extremism among new arrivals	77.6%	4
5	Introduction of special theological and psychological methods in work with persons convicted of extremist crimes on religious grounds	75.5%	5

Note: compiled on the basis of the expert survey; \* - percentage of expert mentions; concordance coefficient  $W = 0.81$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong consistency of expert opinions

The recruitment and training of personnel for the prevention of extremism in institutions of the penitentiary system is an important problem. In particular, a psychological service is found in every penal institution in the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, there is a lack of psychologists dealing specifically with the deradicalization of the behavior of religious extremists.

Another serious issue in deradicalizing the views of prisoners is the shortage of qualified theologians. "Most religious figures in Kazakhstan do not know how to have discussions with radicalists... This concerns incompetence in religious matters and lack of communication skills and the ability to conduct a dialogue with these communities and build bridges" (Mukanov, 2019). Fortunately, notable positive changes occurred in 2022. Out of the 129 staff positions charged with the prevention of extremism in prisons, 124 are filled, of which 27 employees have relevant education (in theology and religious studies). All departments have signed memoranda with universities that train theologians and experts in religious studies.

The shortage of trained staff affects the quality of work with convicts. To the question "What psychological techniques are used in working with individuals convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes?", 47.6% of expert psychologists respond that they use standard methods listed in manuals, 23.8% apply methods recommended by Kazakhstan's psychologists, 19% utilize methods proposed by international experts, and 9.5% use methods they find themselves in various sources.

To the question asking to indicate "One among the main directions of work with persons convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes" from the list, 57.1% of employees (psychologists) answered "yes, all the above is planned and reflected in individual programs of theological rehabilitation work", 28.6% responded "yes, but it is not reflected in individual programs of theological rehabilitation work", and 14.3% selected "no, we do not engage in this direction of work".

The expert surveys allow for a more detailed characterization of the necessary measures for each



direction of operation of the penitentiary system in preventing the spread of religious extremism (Tables 4-6).

**Table 4:** Measures to prevent religious extremism among new arrivals

No.	Measure	%*	Rank
1	The newly arrived prisoners should be warned of the danger posed by religious extremists; theologically substantiated recommendations created by the administration with the help of respected theologians and representatives of Islam cautioning against religious extremism can be distributed	73.5%	1
2	Zero tolerance for acts of bullying and discrimination against prisoners by prison officers. In this case, methods are to be applied depending on the situation	77.6%	2
3	Special attention of theologians to mentoring, training, etc. of convicted youth, since these are young people who are most susceptible to negative influence and open to radicalism	73.5%	3
4	Formation of "identity" (sense of own "Self") in young prisoners	71.4%	4
5	Early identification of convicts who experience particular difficulties in places of deprivation of liberty, as they are the main targets of agitation by religious extremists	69.4%	5
6	Halal food as a cause of radicalization should be eliminated; authoritative experts in Islam or imams should be brought in to explain Islamic food norms	63.3%	6
7	Support for charity on the part of the Islamic community as it supports convicts and reduces tension	55.1%	7

Note: compiled on the basis of the expert survey; \* – percentage of expert mentions; concordance coefficient  $W = 0.79$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong consistency of expert opinions

**Table 5:** Measures to counter religious extremist propaganda in places of detention

No.	Measure	%*	Rank
1	Providing convicted persons with ideologically appropriate religious literature and education	81.6%	1
2	Psychological counseling and theological assistance for convicted prisoners; the best option is to develop sympathy among individuals prone to extremism for people of a different faith who help them	73.5%	2
3	Organization of visits to places of detention by representatives of traditional Islam (clergy, including former religious extremists)	69.4%	3
4	Organization of visits to places of detention by victims of terrorist acts, holding lectures intended for a large audience or discussions with prisoners prone to extremism in small discussion groups	65.3%	4
5	Support for prisoners' artistic activities (participation in theatre performances, etc.)	57.1%	5

Note: compiled on the basis of the expert survey; \* – percentage of expert mentions; concordance coefficient  $W = 0.72$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong consistency of expert opinions

**Table 6:** Measures in personnel recruitment and training

No.	Measure	%*	Rank
1	Penitentiary staff working in direct contact with prisoners undergoing special training to learn to distinguish extremist ideology from traditional Islam, radicalism from belief, and identify a potential extremist	85.7%	1
2	Training of penitentiary staff on the behavior of religious extremists	81.6%	2
3	Careful selection of clergy to work in the penitentiary system, eliminating those who cannot effectively counter the spread of extremism	73.5%	3
4	The obligatory participation of clergy in Friday prayers, their lessons and individual communication with convicted persons, otherwise convicted persons may find their own authorities in the interpretation of traditions	69.4%	4
5	Providing special training for clergy to work with convicts, familiarizing them with the characteristics of religious extremism, teaching them how to combat religious extremism	55.1%	5

Note: compiled on the basis of the expert survey; \* – percentage of expert mentions; concordance coefficient  $W = 0.8$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a strong consistency of expert opinions

Thus, among the methods of working with individuals convicted of extremist crimes on religious grounds, the most efficient resocialization methods, according to the experts, are communication with relatives, psychological help, and organized leisure activities. High significance is also attributed to religious education, the least support among the suggested methods was received by the method of restrictions on communication. Here the opinions of experts split, becoming almost contrary. For instance, one expert (Askar K., 42 years old) argues that depriving prisoners of privileges and restricting their communication for one month will make them more susceptible to upbringing impact, as extremist ideas will start to feel boring and depressing. Importantly, after the deprivation of privileges and restriction on communication convicts need to be explained that they will only be granted the privileges and communication on the condition of their good behavior and rejection of former views. If religious extremists are united in a group, they may initially team up against prison officials, but gradually the religious extremists will split, as some of them will want to regain privileges and remove restrictions on communication, and this will eventually lead to the disintegration of the group.

## 6. Discussion

Religious extremism poses increased danger to state institutions (Pauzin, Vasyukov, Krasheninnikov, & Yudina, 2022) because it encroaches on public order and public safety (Gavrilov, Voronin, Sizova, Laoin, & Demidova-Petrova, 2022), and can promote the disintegration of the institution's functioning and provoke mass unrest both in penitentiary institutions and outside of them. In penal institutions, convicts get involved in the prison community and prison subculture, which present a favorable environment for the representatives of religious extremism imposing postulates of misanthropy on the inmates (Ponomarev & Polishchuk, 2019). In Kazakhstan, there is a model of execution of punishment in the form of imprisonment in a corrective labor colony. In our view, this model, which assumes communal detention and housing of large groups of inmates and their social stratification, creates objective conditions for the concentration of religious extremists and the possibility of them establishing informal leadership over other prisoners. A prison or mixed model of execution of imprisonment is preferable because it provides an opportunity to disengage religious extremists and better control them. The experts believe that special attention should be paid to special preventive measures that will help identify and eliminate religious extremism in places of imprisonment.

We assert that to change the situation and enhance the efficiency of prevention of the spread of religious extremism in penitentiary facilities, it is necessary to improve the distribution of functions between penal institutions and representatives of local authorities, who carry great opportunities for prevention and the rehabilitation of prisoners. The direct involvement and high responsibility of local executive authorities increase the efficiency of addressing the problem of deradicalization.

Penitentiary institutions need not only effective organization of the system of measures to prevent the spread of religious extremism presented in this study but also the formation of a new view on religious crimes in convicts (Ippolitova & Iavorskii, 2015).

Employees of penal institutions often lack experience in solving difficult issues, so when faced with the manifestation of religious extremism, they act according to instructions and do not utilize international experience and advanced methods.

S.V. Garnik and N.V. Rekhtina (2017) suggest that work with persons convicted of extremist offenses needs to be carried out by specially trained personnel (theologians and psychologists) who have undergone specialized psychological and pedagogical and legal training and have skills in the sphere of religious worship. Overall, for the sake of effective prevention of the dissemination of religious extremism, the employees of penitentiary institutions should master the necessary knowledge and develop their professional skills through specialized classes and exchanging experience with employees of specialized law enforcement agencies.

Proceeding from the above, we are convinced that the most developed and significant direction

in the resocialization of individuals convicted of extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan is theological rehabilitation, which should involve representatives of the clergy. Although specialized resocialization programs are not in place, measures that provide rehabilitation are included in theological rehabilitation programs. The latter are part of the generally adopted measures carried out within the framework of current penal enforcement legislation.

The psychological service recognizes the need for and the importance of a special approach to resocialization but adheres to standardized methods applied to convicted persons serving sentences under other criminal articles.

One of the critical trends is informing employees of the world's best practice of deradicalization. Modern rehabilitation programs for those convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes include special psychological approaches in which cognitive psychotherapy plays a key role.

We deem that there is a need to introduce new forms of interaction between civil society institutions, specifically between religious associations, educational institutions, public figures, and leaders of public opinion and the institutions and bodies of the penitentiary system. This constitutes an important condition for improving the resocialization of those convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes. In advanced world practice, the main form of such interaction is the institute of chaplains (priests) representing various religious denominations.

## 7. Conclusion

The spread of religious extremism in penitentiary institutions poses an increased danger to state institutions in the post-Soviet countries of Central Asia because it encroaches on public order and public safety and can promote disintegration of the institution's functioning and provoke mass unrest both in penitentiary institutions and outside of them.

In preventing the dissemination of religious extremism in the penal system, employees of corrective institutions require close interaction with religious administrations and public organizations dealing with the problem of religious extremism, as well as a transition to a mixed model of imprisonment. Specific measures should be developed to prevent religious extremism in the prison system taking into account the methodological recommendations we have proposed (in particular, the implementation of international programs, the work of correctional officers, training in special programs for psychologists and theologians, the involvement of authoritative representatives of the clergy, and the introduction of the institute of chaplains).

Among the limitations of the study, we can list national features of the development of the country's social institutions, which determine the model and mechanisms of operation of penitentiary institutions. Opportunities to change the system of preventing the spread of religious extremism cannot come about without consideration of traditions, religious culture, and the system of administration and development of the country's law enforcement agencies. In our study, we focused on experts who professionally deal with the dissemination of religious extremism and employees of the penitentiary system. Due to limited research resources, we were unable to include in the study prisoners convicted on criminal charges of religious extremism and those who had served their sentences. The experience of these people would have provided a contrasting perspective on the efficiency of the prevention of religious extremism, as well as increased the objectivity of methodological recommendations to prevent the spread of religious extremism. Therefore, in the future, we plan to conduct a new study in which the experts will be individuals convicted of inciting religious extremism and those who have served at least 3 years for these offenses in the penitentiary system.

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