

Clinton praises tolerance in Muslim Russian region

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday visited Kazan, the capital of Russia's predominantly Muslim Tatarstan region. Over half of the region's population is Tatars, a Muslim Turkic people who live alongside a large ethnic Russian Orthodox Christian population and other minorities.

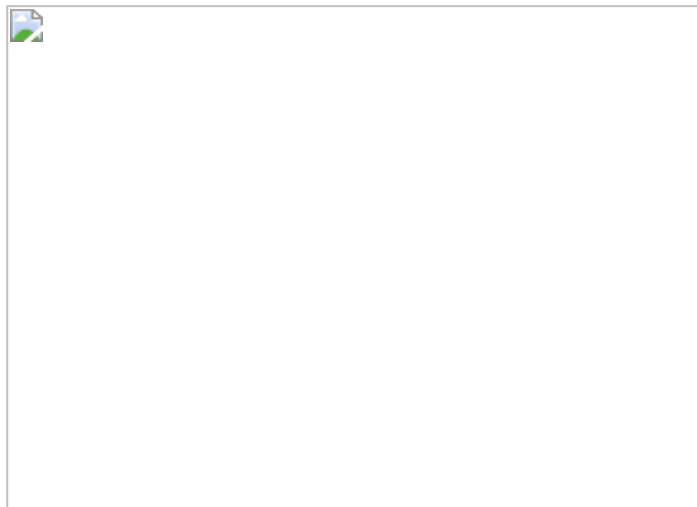
Clinton, wearing a yellow headscarf and taking off her shoes in line with Islamic custom, visited the gigantic Kul Sharif Mosque in the Kazan Kremlin alongside the regional leader Mintimer Shaimiyev. "You are well known as someone who has fostered religious tolerance. It is a wonderful example of what can be done if people work together." She told the local president in the mosque. "I am happy to be here in a place that models interfaith tolerance. So important in the world today," she added.

"There is not a problem that we can name regarding the interfaith relations here," said Shaimiyev, who has been governing Tatarstan since the collapse of communism in 1991.

The population of Russia is 140 million and 20 million of it is Muslim.

During an interview to Echo of Moscow Radio, Clinton stated, "Muslim people cover most of the population in Tatarstan but they live peacefully alongside the other people of different faiths in separate regions and I wanted to see it with my own eyes."

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