

Lawsuit Forces Russia to Prove Kremlin Ownership

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A Moscow court gave the government a month to prove that it owns the Kremlin, after descendants of the country's founding dynasty sued for the right to use the property that their forefathers built and inhabited.

The Moscow Arbitration Court on Monday ordered the Federal Property Management Agency and the Culture Ministry to submit their legal claims to the Kremlin to the descendants of Rurik, the Varangian prince who founded Kievan Rus in the 9th century, according to Rossiiskaya Gazeta, the official state newspaper.

The suit was filed by the Princes foundation, which represents dozens of the known descendents of Rurik, who began a dynasty that ruled until 1598. The 15 years between the last Rurik and first Romanov tsar are known as the Time of Troubles.

“We demand the right to hold meetings inside the Kremlin and look after the historic property,” said Valery Kubarev, head of the Princes foundation.

“This is a question of historical justice,” Kubarev said Tuesday.

The Kremlin complex was built over several centuries, with Ivan the Great completing the wall encircling the 28-hectare complex on the Moscow River more than 500 years ago.

The United Nations included the landmark on its World Heritage List together with the adjacent Red Square in 1990.

The Russian Federation inherited the Kremlin after the Soviet collapse in 1991, and it serves as the official residence of the president, though no official ownership title has ever been registered.

Part of the government’s defense is that the UN recognizes the Kremlin as state property, Rossiiskaya Gazeta said.

“I want the address registered in my passport to say, ‘Kremlin, Moscow,’” Kubarev said. “The Ruriks have always helped spur spiritual and cultural development in Russia, so the dynasty needs to be registered in the heart of this country.”

Kubarev describes himself on his web site as an entrepreneur, writer and “history consultant” to the State Duma.

The Kremlin’s press service declined to comment on the lawsuit immediately, as did the Property Management Agency and the Culture Ministry. The next hearing in the case is scheduled for Oct. 18.

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