

Reporter Hospitalized In Coma After Attack

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Kommersant reporter Oleg Kashin posing for a photograph, which Kommersant provided to other media outlets. **Svetlana Privalova**

Two unknown men waited for journalist Oleg Kashin to come home and then bludgeoned him on his head, arms and legs. Yet his editor said it was Kashin's mangled hands with part of one pinky finger broken off that showed his attackers wanted to make sure he never wrote again.

Kashin, a 30-year-old reporter for Kommersant, was hospitalized in a drug-induced coma after the attack in the early hours Saturday outside his Moscow apartment.

He is the latest in a line of journalists and activists to be assaulted in Russia. In most cases, the perpetrators haven't been found, but the Kremlin appeared determined to show that things will be different this time.

President Dmitry Medvedev ordered the prosecutor general and interior minister to oversee the investigation into the attack, and all of the national television networks, which are under

direct or indirect Kremlin control, led their programs with the news.

"The criminals should be found and punished," Medvedev [wrote](#) on his Twitter account.

Neighbors witnessed the attack on Kashin, who was jumped as he returned home just after midnight. Investigators also have footage from a video surveillance camera outside the building, said Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for the investigators, who confirmed that the journalist's work was a likely motive for the attack.

Kashin's wife, Yevgenia Milova, said he had received no threats.

She wrote on her blog that doctors had performed an operation to put Kashin's broken jaw back together and were monitoring a skull injury. Only one of his legs was broken, she said, but the last joint on his left pinky was completely gone.

Milova and her husband's colleagues both reported that the doctors had induced a coma after operating.

Kashin's editor at [Kommersant](#), Mikhail Mikhailin, said he had no doubt that the attack was in retaliation for Kashin's reporting.

"They broke his fingers," Mikhailin told Ekho Moskvyy. "It is completely obvious that the people who did this did not like what he was saying and what he was writing. What specifically they didn't like, I don't know, but I firmly connect this with his professional activities," Mikhailin said.

Mikhailin said Kashin was investigating "informal organizations" but gave no specifics. The phrase could refer to anything from neo-Nazis to environmentalists.

Kashin has written on a wide range of social and political issues, some politically sensitive, others not. His reporting appeared to be straightforward and balanced.

Among his more contentious reporting topics has been the effort by environmentalists and opposition activists to protect part of the Khimki forest, just north of Moscow, from being cut down for a new highway. Medvedev in August ordered the construction suspended, but there has been no final decision on the fate of the highway.

The attack on Kashin came two days after an opposition activist, Konstantin Fetisov, had his skull fractured in an assault after being released from the Khimki police station, where he had been questioned about a protest.

"Two attacks in two days, it's a bit too much," said Andrei Mironov, a former Soviet dissident who rallied Saturday with about 20 others outside Moscow police headquarters to urge investigators to find Kashin's attackers.

In 2008, Mikhail Beketov, the editor of a Khimki newspaper who was among the first to raise public awareness about the forest, was severely beaten and left crippled and brain-damaged. His attackers haven't been found.

Since 2000, at least 18 killings of journalists have gone unsolved, according to the New York-

based Committee to Protect Journalists.

Vladimir Milov, a prominent opposition leader also at Saturday's rally, said if Medvedev was serious about stopping assaults on journalists and activists, he needed to change the "atmosphere of hatred and aggression" that has encouraged the violence.

Milov described Kashin as an "exceptionally sincere and honest journalist."

NTV television on Saturday interviewed one of Kashin's neighbors, a woman identified only as Olga, who went outside as the ambulance arrived.

"He was covered in blood, his face was completely covered in blood, his legs," she said. "He showed his hand to the doctor so he could see it was all broken."

Yelena Pogrebizhskaya, a musician who lives next door to Kashin, wrote on her blog that a maintenance worker saw two men waiting for Kashin in the courtyard carrying a bouquet of flowers.

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