

Luzhkov Says His Family Not Safe in Moscow

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Former Mayor Yury Luzhkov said he has sent his daughters to study in Britain because he feels unsafe in Russia.

In an [interview](#) with Britain's Sunday Telegraph, Luzhkov said he and his billionaire wife, Yelena Baturina, had "very serious grounds" to worry about their safety.

"There is hatred out there. And if that hatred is all-consuming and the aim is to get at the family then the weakest link ... is the children. We are afraid to leave them here in Russia," he was quoted as saying.

Luzhkov added that he and Baturina decided to send their daughters, Yelena, 18, and Olga, 16, to London "for four to six years," first to study English and then to enroll in an undisclosed university.

He said the two girls had already left Moscow State University and were living in a house that the family rents in West London.

Moscow police said Monday that they were unaware of any threats against Luzhkov's children.

"We ask Luzhkov to tell us if any such facts exist. We are ready to start a rigorous investigation," police spokesman Viktor Biryukov told RIA-Novosti.

Luzhkov's comments followed media speculation that he was planning to move abroad after President Dmitry Medvedev fired him on Sept. 28 for "loss of confidence."

Luzhkov said that while the decision to send his daughters abroad had been difficult, he had no plans to leave the country.

"I am a Muscovite, I was born in Moscow, I am a patriot of my country, and it will be difficult to get rid of me. Why should I leave? Especially since it could be a gift for those in power who hate me," he said.

Luzhkov's talk about threats probably reflected his wife's business interests, said Alexei Mukhin, director of the Center for Political Information, a think tank. "Luzhkov has now become useful for Baturina by being seen as a democratic leader," he said.

Baturina, who has been accused of amassing a billion-dollar fortune by skimming the city's lucrative real estate deals while her husband was mayor for 18 years, has vehemently denied media reports that she is selling her company, Inteko, or moving assets abroad.

Luzhkov, however, accused "businessmen close to the Kremlin" of initiating a campaign to take away the company.

"They have already been to my wife's firm," he said, adding that Inteko was "a tasty delicacy." He did not name anybody.

Inteko last week denied a report that Baturina and Luzhkov were negotiating with billionaire Senator Suleiman Kerimov to sell the firm.

Kerimov is seen as close to the government.

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