

More Denials Over Kashin Attack

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The Investigative Committee's top department was assigned on Wednesday to handle the case of the attack on Kommersant reporter Oleg Kashin, who remained heavily sedated, as suspects singled out by the media denied involvement.

The country's chief investigator, Alexander Bastrykin, held a meeting Wednesday with criminologists and investigators working on the case, the committee said in a [statement](#). It named no suspects.

The probe is headed by “legendary investigator” Irina Kyrchanova, herself a journalist's daughter, who solved the murder of reputed mafia don Otari Kvantrishvili and nabbed a gang of skinheads who killed 20 migrants in Moscow, a committee spokesman [told](#) Kommersant.

Kashin, 30, also a popular blogger, was beaten by two unknown assailants Saturday and remains hospitalized with head trauma and multiple broken bones, including his upper and lower jaws, a leg and several fingers.

Vitaly Frantsuzov, head of the hospital where Kashin is undergoing treatment, denied reports that the journalist had regained consciousness.

The Council of Europe on Wednesday joined the U.S. State Department and Amnesty International in condemning the attack. "I am very encouraged by President Dmitry Medvedev's strong stance against these attacks," council Secretary-General Thorbjorn Jagland said in a statement.

Medvedev has promised to punish those responsible for the attack even if they turn out to be high-ranking officials.

Kashin wrote recently about the razing of the Moscow region's Khimki forest and clashed with the pro-Kremlin Young Guard movement and Pskov Governor Andrei Turchak — conflicts that his colleagues said might be linked to the attack.

But a spokeswoman for Khimki Mayor Vladimir Strelchenko said she had never heard Kashin's name before and added that the mayor was "ready to cooperate with investigators," Radio Liberty [reported](#) Wednesday.

Turchak's office has offered Kashin a speedy recovery and declined to comment on the attack, citing the ongoing investigation.

Turchak is a former leader with Young Guard, which earlier posted Kashin's photo signed "Will be punished" on its web site. The group removed the photo this week.

Another pro-Kremlin youth group, Nashi, which also has a record of clashes with journalists and rights activists, proposed Wednesday to provide all reporters with free-of-charge bodyguards.

"Your professional activity is very important to our country, and that's why we are ready to provide you all with assistance and support," the group said in a [statement](#).

Yekaterina Petrova, a coordinator for the initiative, said no one had applied for a bodyguard as of Wednesday evening.

"Apparently, the journalists are not in that bad need of assistance," Petrova said by telephone.

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