

Hearings Start in Defamation Lawsuit Against Kashin

April 28, 2011

The  Moscow Times

Moscow's Khamovnichesky District Court opened hearings Thursday into a defamation case against Kommersant reporter Oleg Kashin, who claimed that the assault that left him in a coma in November was masterminded by the Kremlin's youth policy chief, Interfax said.

Two unknown men attacked Kashin outside his apartment building in downtown Moscow, beating him with metal rods.

The case remains unsolved, despite President Dmitry Medvedev personally promising to Kashin that the attackers will be punished.

In March, Kashin wrote on his blog that investigators are stalling the check because they have traced the attack to Vasily Yakemenko, head of the Federal Agency for Youth Affairs, whom Kashin criticized in his publications.

Yakemenko filed a defamation lawsuit, demanding a compensation of 500,000 rubles (\$18,000). The next hearing is scheduled for May 23.

Yakemenko previously headed the pro-Kremlin youth group Nashi, known for intimidation campaigns against opposition activists and journalists. Nashi has been accused of violence, but never convicted of wrongdoing.

The group won a similar lawsuit last year against journalist Alexander Podrabinek over an anti-Soviet article that angered Nashi.

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