

Putting Dog Owners on a Leash After a Brutal Attack

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

May 04, 2011



With a series of dog attacks making the headlines in recent months, the State Duma approved a bill in a first reading in March that would require dogs of "potentially dangerous " breeds to be walked w **Igor Tabakov**

The attack on Monday afternoon lasted for just a few seconds.

But when it was over, 12-year-old Nastya Sakharova lay crumpled on the ground with serious injuries to her face, arm and hip.

Her small Yorkshire terrier, which she was walking outside her apartment building in southwest Moscow, was dead.

The attacker, a massive bullmastiff, only halted its frenzied assault when frantic passers-by managed to pry it off the girl.

The dog had no leash or muzzle, and its 57-year-old owner, who stood by watching, was

drunk, the girl's mother said.

"I don't want to lock this man up in prison. He will be held responsible in the next life," the mother, Yelena Sakharova, said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "But I will seek the destruction of this dog."

The ferocious attack could give impetus to legislation to toughen rules for dog owners, who already face fines and prison terms for attacks but are rarely prosecuted. Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov called for new laws on pet ownership after Monday's attack, his office said in a [statement](#).

New rules are on the way. With a series of attacks making the headlines in recent months, the State Duma approved a bill in a first reading in March that would require dogs of "potentially dangerous" breeds to be walked with a leash and muzzle and their owners to pass a class on keeping the dogs and register them with the authorities. A second Duma reading is expected in mid-May.

Violators of the new rules would face fines of up to 5,000 rubles (\$180) and jail time of up to 15 days, with the possible confiscation of the dogs, according to a second bill that is scheduled to be considered in a first reading after May 20, the Duma's web site said.

"It is an absurd situation when there are millions of pet owners in the country and practically no legal regulations," Yevgeny Tugolukov, a senior Duma deputy and co-author of the legislation, told The Moscow Times by e-mail in March.

The Criminal Code currently envisages fines or prison terms from two to eight years for owners of dogs that injure other people, depending on the severity of the injuries and whether the attack was intentional, Tugolukov said.

Despite the law, owners of dogs that have attacked people over the past decade have mostly gotten away with small fines or no punishment at all from investigators overburdened with other work, said Tatyana Pavlova, a leading animal rights activist who formerly headed City Hall's flora and fauna department, which oversees dog issues.

Pavlova, who has spoken with Duma deputies about the new legislation, said owners should have the right to decide on an individual basis whether their dogs are dangerous and should be walked with a leash and muzzle, a practice followed by many European countries.

Ideally, she said, dog owners must also be held responsible when their pets scare people, not just bite them.

After Monday's attack, Nastya Sakharova was hospitalized with wounds to her cheek, left arm and right hip, her mother said. She has undergone one operation and faces at least one more.

The bullmastiff's owner, Vyacheslav Morozov, was detained by police after the attack but soon released because the law doesn't allow the detention of owners of dogs that attack people, the chief of the local police precinct, Anton Belous, said in an interview Tuesday with Channel One television.

Morozov earlier had been detained by police several times after his dog attacked other

animals in the neighborhood, Belous said.

Repeated calls to Morozov's home phone went unanswered Wednesday.

The Moscow Investigative Committee said in a [statement](#) that it has opened a criminal investigation into the attack and banned Morozov from leaving the city. If charged with involuntarily inflicting serious injuries on another person, Morozov would face a maximum sentence of six years in prison.

The bullmastiff remains at home with him, Vesti-Moscow television [reported](#).

Another 90-kilogram bullmastiff bit to death a 63-year-old woman in the Rostov regional city of Taganrog after she tried to play with it Wednesday, news web site Lifenews.ru reported. Her daughter suffered severe injuries as she tried to drag the dog off her mother.

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