

Blogger Contests Accounts of African 'Ghetto' Outside Moscow

By [Jonathan Earle](#)

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A state-owned radio station has been accused of inciting racial hatred after airing a report that a neighborhood in the town of Lyubertsy outside Moscow had turned into a "ghetto" where fighting, drinking, hustling African immigrants terrorize locals.

Vesti FM, in a two-part report [last Thursday](#) and [Tuesday](#), said non-black residents in Lyubertsy's Krasnaya Gorka district are afraid to walk the streets alone and leave their children unattended due to the large number of aggressive Africans who have moved into the neighborhood.

"It's just disastrous," Vesti FM reporter Ksenia Krikheli quoted a local resident as saying. "Prostitutes live in that house over there, and [the Africans] fill up two entrance ways. ... My realtor acquaintance says they sell drugs."

She said other residents and shopkeepers testified to the Africans' proclivity for liquor,

fighting and dancing in the yards with tambourines and drums until dawn.

Krikheli did not interview a single black resident of Krasnaya Gorka for her story, saying most speak neither Russian nor English.

But an influential blogger challenged the reports Wednesday, saying a lengthy tour of the area revealed a working-class neighborhood living in relative racial harmony.

After three hours touring the district and talking to locals Sunday, blogger Ilya Varlamov wrote that he and a friend could not find any proof of the allegations, or even anybody who would repeat them.

"They're very polite, they always say 'hello,' and I've never seen them drunk," a female shopkeeper told Varlamov, who runs one of the most popular Russian [blogs](#).

"We live well. There are no problems with the Africans whatsoever," another woman, accompanied by three children, told him.

Varlamov also contested allegations about a linguistic barrier, saying he had no trouble approaching a South African man who had moved to the region to be with his girlfriend, and another, from Nigeria, who said — in bad Russian — that he had recently bought an apartment in Krasnaya Gorka.

The South African, who was not identified, told Varlamov, also in Russian, that the black community was outraged by the radio report and was planning to sue.

"We saw many blacks. It's true that there are a lot here," Varlamov wrote on his blog. "We saw how they greet their Russian neighbors, shake their hands. We saw several mixed families. But no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't find anything negative."

As for the allegation of dancing men with tambourines, the local mother of three dismissed it, saying: "Nonsense, that's the first time I've heard that."

Varlamov, who said the radio report was "stoking ethnic hatred," [posted](#) his report on his blog hosted by the Public Chamber.

Neither the Public Chamber nor Vesti FM have commented on the radio report or Varlamov's rebuttal. Krikheli could not be immediately reached for comment.

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