

3 Uzbeks Detained in Killing of Football Fan

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Raising new fears of ethnic tensions, an ethnic Russian football fan has been beaten to death with metal pipes in St. Petersburg, and three Uzbek migrant workers are in custody on suspicion of aggravated assault.

St. Petersburg investigators said Friday that the death came as a result of a brawl sparked by "sudden personal hostility."

The investigators did not release the victim's name, but media reports identified him as Roman "Rubin" Lovchikov, 22, a supporter of the local Zenit football club.

The three suspects were [identified](#) by the Investigative Committee as Mamur Kudratov, 32, Ikram Razikov, 41, and his brother Nizam, 33.

The migrants, all communal services workers, claimed they were attacked by Lovchikov

and three friends, Gazeta.ru [said](#), citing an unidentified city police official. The three friends, meanwhile, said the Uzbeks had been drinking and attacked them after they reprimanded one of them for "insolent behavior."

Lovchikov walked away after the brawl but collapsed on some nearby stairs and died of his injuries, the report said. A friend, Roman Ivanov, was briefly hospitalized with head lacerations, Rusnovosti.ru [reported](#).

A case was opened on charges of intentionally inflicting grave bodily harm that resulted in death, which could land the Uzbeks in jail for 15 years. A district court authorized the detention of all three on Saturday, RIA-Novosti said.

The Investigative Committee and the city government both have denied that the fight resulted from ethnic tension, but not everyone was convinced. Lovchikov was beaten in the face by migrants in the same place last week, his girlfriend, identified as Alina, [told](#) Rusnovosti.ru.

Several online Zenit fan forums accused the police of playing down the ethnic side of the attack, although they also [urged](#) against "calls for a second Manezh Square."

Some 5,500 nationalists and football fans clashed with police on Moscow's Manezh Square in December during a rally to protest a police investigation into the deadly shooting of Spartak Moscow fan Yegor Sviridov during a fight with Dagestani natives.

A Moscow jury ruled all six Dagestani suspects guilty last week, with sentencing expected this week.

Fears of ethnic unrest are high ahead of State Duma elections in December, a time when parties and the Kremlin alike have fueled ethnic tensions in the past to score political points.

President Dmitry Medvedev has called for ethnic peace.

Nationalists plan to hold their annual Russian March next week.

A 16-year-old Spartak Moscow fan was stabbed to death in Moscow on Saturday, RIA-Novosti [reported](#). Police said he was killed in a turf war between two teenage gangs and that an 18-year-old suspect has been detained and pleaded guilty, saying he acted in self-defense.

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