The Moscow Times
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Tajik Opposition Leader Stabbed in Moscow

January 15, 2012

An exiled opposition leader from Tajikistan whose party and publications angered Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon was stabbed in Moscow, police and associates said.

Dodojon Atovulloyev was attacked late Thursday near the Italian restaurant Viaggio on Komsomolsky Prospekt in central Moscow, and he was hospitalized with two knife wounds in the stomach, police and news reports said.

Atovulloyev's associate Dilovar Ashurov said Friday that after a complicated operation at the Sklifosovsky hospital the politician "feels normal."

He declined to comment whether the attack was related to Atovulloyev's political activity.

A former senior Tajik security official, Erkin Mukhiddinov, said Sunday that the attack was most likely connected to a personal dispute.

"No intelligence agency of the world would work in the dirty and clumsy manner of this so-

called attempt on Atovulloyev," he told reporters in comments carried by Interfax.

Police said a 23-year-old Tajik national was detained shortly after the assault on Atovulloyev with traces of blood on his hands and clothes. He was released, however, after his "innocence was proven," police said in a statement.

Atovulloyev, 56, left Tajikistan in 1992 and lives in Germany and Russia. He leads the Vatandor (Patriot) party, which is opposed to Rakhmon's policies.

He also edits the Charoghi-Ruz (Light of Day) newspaper that fiercely criticizes Rakhmon and has been banned by his government.

Atovulloyev returned to Tajikistan in 2004 but left shortly after, saying he feared for his life.

(AP, MT)

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