The Moscow Times
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Man Dies In 'Savage' Police Beating

By Alexandra Odynova

March 12, 2012



Promises of police reform suffered another setback Monday with the announcement of the death of a Kazan citizen allegedly assaulted by local police officers.

Sergei Nazarov, 52, was detained Friday on minor hooliganism charges in the Tatarstan republic's capital.

The following afternoon, he was taken from the detention center to a hospital with rectal injuries, the region's branch of the Investigative Committee said in a statement released Monday.

Nazarov underwent surgery but died late Sunday.

Nazarov's relatives say he told doctors before the surgery that officers had beaten him up and raped him with a champagne bottle, RIA-Novosti reported.

The head of Tatarstan's Interior Ministry, Asgat Safarov, called the incident "extremely

savage" and said the police chief in the city where Nazarov was held along with five of his subordinates had been suspended.

A criminal case was opened on charges of abuse of office and infliction of grievous bodily harm, which carry a punishment of up to 10 years in prison.

All of the implicated officers have denied fault, Interfax reported.

They say Nazarov, who had been convicted six times, was detained for being drunk and using bad language.

The Interior Ministry's statement said that while in detention, Nazarov felt pain in his stomach and was given "an injection" but got worse the following day.

The police say Nazarov's injuries were self-inflicted, Interfax reported.

"If the police officers' guilt is confirmed, I will make sure they go to jail, and the city police chief will be fired," Safarov was quoted as saying by the ministry.

Police reform has been one of the main initiatives of departing President Dmitry Medvedev.

During his five years in office, he has aimed to fight corruption and violence by law enforcement authorities.

But observers say his efforts have achieved only mixed results.

In January, St. Petersburg officers fatally beat 15-year-old Nikita Leontyev while he was being detained on suspicion of robbery.

That incident led to the resignation of the city's police chief, Mikhail Sukhodolsky.

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