

Detour to Jail Interrupts Dacha Trip

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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This palatial estate in the Krasnodar region, known as “Tkachyov’s dacha,” is drawing environmentalists’ fury. **Maria Ukhova**

An environmental activist and his lawyer were arrested Wednesday in connection with their attempt to take photographs at an elite mansion in the Krasnodar region.

Suryen Gazaryan, of the Environmental Watch for the North Caucasus, and lawyer Viktor Dutlov showed up at the mansion Tuesday but were roughed up by security guards.

They were trying to take photos of the mansion's fence to use as evidence in the criminal case against Gazaryan, prominent environmental campaigner Yevgenia Chirikova [said](#) on her LiveJournal blog Wednesday.

Gazaryan believes that the residence is a dacha of the regional governor, Alexander Tkachyov.

He intended to tell President Dmitry Medvedev on Thursday that the mansion had been built illegally in a nature reserve.

But the Kremlin denied him an invitation, saying there weren't enough seats.

In early March, police accused Gazaryan and a fellow activist, Yevgeny Vitishko, of [destroying part of the fence](#) surrounding the dacha during a protest campaign in November, the Environmental Watch for the North Caucasus said.

If convicted on that charge, Gazaryan and Vitishko face up to five years in prison.

Gazaryan called Chirikova on Tuesday and told her that security guards had detained him and Dutlov outside a mansion popularly referred to as "Tkachyov's dacha."

He said their mobile phones had been stolen and that police were keeping them in a utility room.

A video of the conversation was [posted](#) Tuesday on YouTube by prominent blogger Oleg Kozyrev.

In a February report by RIA-Novosti, Tkachyov's representatives denied that "Tkachyov's dacha" belongs to or is used by the governor.

After being detained at the mansion three hours, Gazaryan and Dutlov were transferred to a police station in Tuapse.

They spent a night standing in a cell where the air temperature was about 10 degrees Celsius, Chirikova wrote. She added: "I can't call that anything other than torture."

On Wednesday, a magistrate court in Tuapse convicted Gazaryan and Dutlov of disobeying police orders and sentenced them to 10 days in jail, Environmental Watch for the North Caucasus [said](#) on its website.

The group said the conviction was based on "fabricated" police testimony accusing Gazaryan and Dutlov of trying to flee after police asked them for identification.

The judge rejected more than 10 of the defendants' requests, including one to question witnesses and consider the video of the guards robbing the activists, the group said.

Earlier in the week, Gazaryan had been excluded from the list of speakers at Thursday's meeting of Medvedev's human rights council, he [said](#) on his LiveJournal blog.

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