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Allegations Mount in Kazan Police Scandal

By Jonathan Earle

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Top law enforcement officials are scrambling to battle dozens of new allegations of police brutality in Kazan after the shocking death of a detainee.

The incident has sparked local protests and cast serious doubt over outgoing President Dmitry Medvedev's much-touted police reforms. Federal investigators have received 28 citizen complaints of lawbreaking by Kazan police.

And two officers from the now-notorious Dalny station have been arrested over the alleged rape of a 22-year-old man last year, an Investigative Committee spokesman said, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Osker Krylov said police sodomized him with a pencil and a bottle until he confessed to stealing money from a client. Krylov, a programmer, had been called to the Dalny station to fix a computer problem.

A regional court has issued arrest warrants for two former police officers, Ainur Rakhmatullin, 30, and Amir Sharafullin, 28, in connection with the October incident. They deny Krylov's abuse allegation.

Rakhmatullin, the station's former head investigator, is also accused of being complicit in the beating of a 20-year-old woman by two officers in January.

Rights activists say systemic abuse at the Dalny station culminated in the case of Sergei Nazarov, 52, who died after allegedly being violently raped with a champagne bottle by police at the station.

Four officers have been arrested in connection with the case.

Nazarov's death sparked national outrage and prompted Communist Party boss Gennady Zyuganov to compare the police to the Gestapo.

He called on Communist Party deputies to grill Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev when the top cop addresses the State Duma on April 13.

Allegations of police brutality in Kazan come as a major embarrassment to Nurgaliyev, who has overseen President Dmitry Medvedev's signature police reforms, which were aimed at curtailing widespread lawlessness in the force.

On Wednesday, the nation's top investigator is scheduled to arrive in Kazan to oversee the Investigative Committee's probe into police misconduct in Tatarstan.

Local activists have announced that they will hold an unsanctioned demonstration to greet Alexander Bastrykin.

Hundreds of people, many carrying champagne bottles, took part in a protest Sunday that ended in mass detentions.

Regional police later accused the protesters of having links to local criminal groups, a claim activists denounced as a provocation.

"It's simply hilarious. It looks shameful. ... Why didn't they detain the protesters with pro-criminal posters? They detained the ones who were holding signs protesting police brutality," the Movement Against Criminality and Lawlessness said in statement posted on its Vkontakte page.

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