

Prominent Muslim Figure Killed in Knife Attack

April 11, 2012



Metin Mekhtiyev

Eminent Muslim community leader Metin Mekhtiyev was knifed to death outside his home in Moscow in an alleged racially motivated attack.

Mekhtiyev, a prominent member of the Islamic Cultural Center and of Azeri descent, was found dead Tuesday with knife wounds to the neck and face, the Investigative Committee said in a statement.

Investigators said the most likely motive for the attack was theft, according to information from witnesses. The statement said the attackers took a luxury Vertu telephone, keys to Mekhtiyev's apartment and as much as 6,000 rubles (\$200).

Islamic Cultural Center head Abdul-Vahed Niyazov said Mekhtiyev was murdered by nationalists.

"Only one of the attackers did the killing, and he acted very cold-bloodedly. The murderer cut

his throat and demonstratively wiped the bloody knife on his sleeve," Niyazov told Gazeta.ru, citing information from investigators.

Friend of the victim and head of the Mirotvorets foundation Andrei Getamov said the fact that the attackers brought a woman pointed to nationalists, Interfax reported.

"As a rule, they take women to do 'business,' so that later they can make a performance and allege that the 'black guy' was acting aggressively toward her and they had to step in," he said. The term "black" is used as a racial pejorative, often against people from the Caucasus.

Mekhdiyev, 33, was born in Moscow. He was one of the most well-known figures at non-governmental organization the Islamic Cultural Center, which has operated in Russia since 1991. The group states as its mission the development of relations with the Muslim community in Europe and CIS countries.

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