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Homeless Won't Be Expelled for St. Pete Forum, Police Chief Says

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St. Petersburg's police chief said homeless people will not be driven out of the city in preparation for next week's economic forum. **Igor Tabakov**

Rumors that homeless St. Petersburg residents will be expelled from the city before the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum next week are unfounded, city police chief Sergei Umnov said Thursday.

Police have never undertaken this practice, Umnov said.

"Major international events being held in St. Petersburg cannot serve as an excuse for this," Umnov said in remarks cited by the city's human rights ombudsman, Alexander Shishlov, according to Interfax.

Last month, St. Petersburg-based homeless rights organization Nochlezhka sent letters to Shishlov, national human rights ombudsman Vladimir Lukin and Economic Development Minister Andrei Belousov asking them to ensure that the rights of homeless people were defended during the forum.

''Many official events of such stature in Russia are accompanied by a so-called 'purging' of the city of socially excluded citizens,'' Nochlezhka said in a statement.

The 2012 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which will run from June 21 to 23, will feature the participation of President Vladimir Putin and a range of international business and political leaders, including such figures as Siemens CEO Peter Löscher, Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein and American diplomat Henry Kissinger.

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