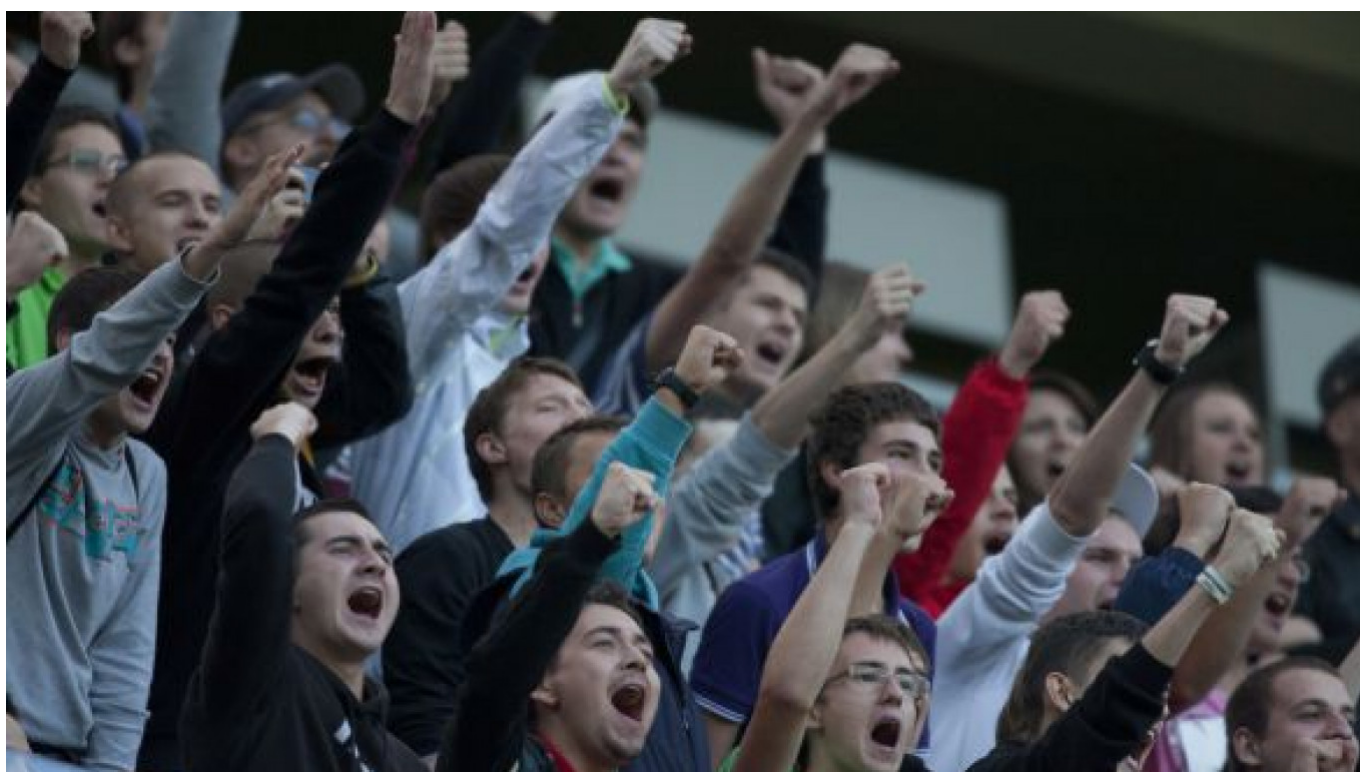


Dagestani Leader Urges Anti-Racism Fight After Football Brawl

August 26, 2012



Football fans shouting anti-Anzhi slogans Thursday at Lokomotiv Stadium. **Alexander Zemlianichenko**

Dagestan's leader has appealed to Russians to fight nationalism and racism after Anzhi Makhachkala supporters were attacked following a Europa League match marred by crowd trouble.

Police detained 120 football fans during and after the match.

"While most Russian fans cheered Anzhi's victory, others have tried to use the match to incite nationalistic hysteria and hatred between various ethnic groups in Russia," Dagestan leader Magomedshah Magomedov said Friday in a statement.

Magomedov said it was not the first time Anzhi fans had been victims of nationalistic violence.

Anzhi thanked Moscow police for keeping order and protecting their fans at the Lokomotiv Stadium during Thursday evening's first-leg tie against Dutch club AZ Alkmaar.

“We would like to say special thanks to the Lokomotiv Football Club for providing their home arena for our match,” Anzhi said in a statement. “We also want to thank the Moscow police for providing a high level of security during the match.”

Thursday’s match, won by Anzhi 1-0, was attended by several hundred fans who racially abused Anzhi players and threw objects, including flares, onto the pitch. Some fans gave a Nazi salute and chanted slogans such as “Russia for Russians” and “Caucasus natives go home.”

About 80 fans were detained during the match, while another 40 were held in the Moscow metro for attacking Anzhi fans and injuring several people.

UEFA has banned Anzhi from playing at home in the region this season for security reasons.

Anzhi coach Guus Hiddink criticized the fans’ behavior.

“I’m not sure if those were the real football fans,” the Dutchman told reporters after the match. “I think it was a provocation against our club. I don’t know what UEFA will do next. They may ask us to play elsewhere.”

Many of the troublemakers were Zenit fans who traveled from St. Petersburg with plans to disrupt the match, news reports said.

Their anger appears to be linked to the beating on Aug. 20 of several Zenit St. Petersburg supporters by police and stadium security staff after a league game against Anzhi in Makhachkala.

One of the fans, Alexander Makasin, was admitted Friday to an intensive care unit in St. Petersburg with damage to his spleen and other internal injuries, the fans’ group said on its official website.

On Wednesday, about 50 Zenit fans attacked a group of Dagestan natives in the outdoor dining area of a McDonald’s restaurant in St. Petersburg. City police opened a criminal case into the incident on Thursday.✉

(Reuters, MT)

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