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Physical Threats Mark Construction Fight

By Rachel Nielsen

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When confronted by residents, a representative for the woman building the restaurant couldn't produce all of the paperwork and signatures required for the construction site, a local municipal deputy said.

Construction of a restaurant in Moscow's Lefortovo neighborhood has led to physical threats and written complaints after a handful of local residents and municipal deputies challenged the workers at the reportedly illegal building site.

The tensions came as the city's Land Use Department announced last week that close to 400 Muscovites had made allegations of illegal construction through its online portal, meaning almost 100 complaints had been added since this summer.

The construction site is on Aviamotornaya Ulitsa, in the city's east, and work is in the preliminary stages. Workers have begun to place giant metal slabs on a lawn between two residential buildings, a municipal deputy and a resident said. Such slabs are used to support machinery.

A handful of residents have complained to Lefortovo municipal deputies Alexandra Andreyeva and Pavel Tarasov, saying the construction is happening right under apartment windows.

If a restaurant is situated between the two residences, "it will be awful for us," Galina Myakinkova, a pensioner who lives in one of the buildings, said by telephone. She said the area is already polluted and congested by a car wash and traffic.

Residents contacted Andreyeva and Tarasova, both preservation advocates in the community, early in October. During an initial confrontation on the street, a representative of the woman building the restaurant couldn't produce all the paperwork and signatures required for the construction site, Andreyeva said by phone.

The representative, Elshan Mustafayev, couldn't be reached immediately for comment.

Andreyeva said he still didn't show all the necessary documents at a meeting later in the month with residents and Lefortovo Neighborhood Deputy Head Yevgeny Pavlov.

Construction resumed Oct. 30, and residents again summoned Andreyeva to the site. Mustafayev said she "smelled like liquor" and called her a "wino," she said.

She filed a police complaint against him for slander, while he accused her in the same precinct of stealing tools and breaking windows at the site, she said.

Mustafayev also told Andreyeva that if he had been operating the crane that day, he would have dropped a slab on her head, she alleged.

In the most recent incident, Myakinkova was walking her dog when a construction team began to lift metal plates onto the lawn again.

"I tried to stop it," the 65-year-old said.

She walked onto a plate at the site, where she was joined by her 31-year-old daughter, another female resident and a young man. While Myakinkova was still standing on the piece of metal, a crane operator lifted it about half a meter off the ground, she said.

She said Mustafayev told the crane operator moving the plate, "Let her croak! Lift it!"

Andreyeva has written a complaint to the Lefortovo Prosecutor's Office about the incidents, and she sent a separate letter to the city prosecutor, which she provided to The Moscow Times.

Both she and Tarasov have written and co-signed letters to the chairman of Mayor Sergei Sobyanin's urban planning and land commission as well as to the city's technical inspection department for roads and construction sites.

City authorities have 30 days to answer, Andreyeva said.

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