

Ukraine Police Unit Stormed After Brutal Rape

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — Protesters hurling firebombs stormed a local police station unit in southern Ukraine after authorities refused to detain one of two police officers implicated in the brutal gang-rape of a young woman.

Residents of Vradiyevka, some 330 kilometers south of Kiev, continued to rally outside the station Tuesday, booing the local governor and vowing to continue their vigil until the officer is arrested. During the storming late Monday, protesters smashed windows, broke doors and set fire to the building, while police fought back with tear gas.

The case has caused widespread anger among Ukrainians, who say that corruption, lawlessness and the impunity of government officials and their wealthy friends has increased markedly since President Viktor Yanukovich came to power three years ago.

The victim, a 29-year-old local woman, was returning home from a bar last Wednesday when

she says she was shoved into a car, driven to the woods, raped and savagely beaten by two policemen, aided by a driver. The woman remains in the hospital in critical condition, having sustained multiple fractures to her skull and bruises all over her body.

One of the police officers and the driver have been detained, but the second policeman — whom the woman identified as the main perpetrator — has remained free, claiming he was on duty at the local police headquarters when the crime happened.

But the victim, identified as Irina Krashkova, said in a video interview with local media that the police officer was lying.

"This is not true, I know 100 percent that he was there. Why? Because he was the first to rape me; he beat me and called me all kinds of names," Krashkova said, in a low, timid voice sitting on a hospital bed. Her head was shaven and bandaged after surgery, and her face was swollen and bruised.

The Associated Press does not generally identify victims of sexual assault, but makes an exception where the victim has publicly identified herself, as Krashkova has done.

Two senior regional police officials and a prosecutor have been fired for failing to properly respond to the crime. President Yanukovich ordered a thorough investigation and Interior Minister Vitaly Zakharchenko was summoned to the parliament.

Zakharchenko put the blame on his subordinates, saying they initially withheld the fact that police officers were implicated in the crime. He said authorities were now checking a surveillance video from the police station, which the alleged perpetrator claims proves his alibi. Zakharchenko also called for a reform of the Interior Ministry and a boost in its funding to provide incentives for the best people to serve in the police.

The minister expressed his condolences to the victim and her family, though he stopped short of an apology.

The speech caused anger among the opposition. "I do not believe your words that you want to reform anything, same as your party," said opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk. "Do a heroic deed, write a letter of resignation."

The crime brought to back memories of last year's brutal attack on an 18-year-old in the same Mykolayiv region. Oksana Makar was raped, strangled and set on fire by three young men, some of whom had well-connected relatives. She died of her burns two weeks later.

Two of the three suspects were initially released and were re-arrested only after nationwide protests. The case galvanized Ukrainians fed up with the corruption that allows people with money and connections to avoid punishment, whether for violating traffic laws or for more serious crimes.

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