

Nationalists Stage Anti-Migrant 'Russian Raids' in Petersburg

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian nationalists have jumped on the bandwagon of marketplace raids following a police clampdown in Moscow, taking to the streets in force and armed with baseball bats — to check the documents of fruit vendors, they say.

The so-called "Russian raids" in St. Petersburg helped expose several dozen illegal fruit stands staffed by foreigners without work permits this week, raid co-organizer Nikolai Bondarik told RIA Novosti on Wednesday.

"There's nobody to do it but us," said Bondarik, a radical nationalist who sits on the Russian opposition's Coordination Council.

Raiders comprise groups of 50 to 60 grassroots enthusiasts, both radical nationalists and civil society activists "tired of having [Tajikistan's capital] Dushanbe in our streets," Bondarik said.

The raiders check the work permits of vendors and report them to the police if there are any problems with their paperwork, he said.

City news website Fontanka.ru claimed the raiders smashed fruit stands using the baseball bats, and published a photograph showing fruit and vegetables spilled across the ground near a market stall, but Bondarik denied the allegations and said the bats were for self-defense.

The St. Petersburg raids were prompted by last week's assault on a Moscow policeman, whose skull was smashed by a marketplace worker when he was trying to detain a sex offender.

The incident triggered sweeping police raids in Moscow, where more than 1,000 people, most of them migrant workers from Russia's North Caucasus region or neighboring Central Asian countries, were detained at local marketplaces. The attacker was arrested and faces life in prison.

No violence was reported during the "Russian raids," though police were looking into reports about raiders obstructing lawful street trading, a St. Petersburg police spokesman told RIA Novosti.

He declined to comment on a report by Fontanka.ru that cited an unnamed city policeman as calling the raids "an interesting and so far effective measure."

The fractured nationalist movement in Russia gained notoriety during the 2000s due to the actions of its radicals, mostly skinheads who formed migrant-killing gangs. Skinhead activity in Russia has decreased following a series of high-profile trials in recent years, and nationalists are increasingly switching from violent attacks on migrants to "raids" teetering on the brink of legality, anti-xenophobia watchdog Sova said in a report earlier this month.

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