The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Investigators Launch Check Into Corruption at Markets

By Natalya Krainova

August 01, 2013



Police have been checking all large markets in Moscow following Saturday's incident.

Investigators have launched nationwide inspections of markets for corrupt ties to law enforcement after President Vladimir Putin criticized Moscow police officers for standing idle while their colleague was severely beaten at a market on Saturday.

Police officer Anton Kudryashov was left in need of brain surgery after the attack near Matveyevsky market in the city's west by Khalimat Rasulova and her husband, Magomed Rasulov, natives of the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan. The pair have said they were combative because police were detaining Rasulov's cousin, 18-year-old mentally disabled Magomed Magomedov, in connection with the rape of a 15-year-old girl.

The police officers who were present during the violent clash but did nothing to stop it now face negligence charges, with Putin hinting that their inaction pointed to a bigger issue: corruption between police and sellers at markets.

But the policemen are not the only ones facing criticism, as some say the inspections that kicked off on Monday are inconsistently being directed at foreign migrants.

Experts say authorities may be using Saturday's incident as a pretext for raids on illegal migrants in a bid to boost popular support of pro-Kremlin candidates ahead of the Sept. 8 regional elections across the country.

"Authorities are acting rationally from the point of view of their own future, because they will be praised [by the public] for fighting illegal migration," Alexei Makarkin, deputy head of the Center for Political Technologies, told The Moscow Times by telephone, citing popular anti-migrant sentiment.

On Wednesday, Moscow police detained about 1,400 illegal foreign migrants at two illegal production facilities in the city's east, placing them in a temporary tent camp to await deportation, RIA Novosti reported.

About 1, 200 of them were Vietnamese nationals, while 200 others came from Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Kyrgyzia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan.

Following the raids in Moscow on Wednesday, two district police heads in the east of Moscow and two deputies were fired on Thursday over their failure to fight illegal migration, Interfax reported.

The Investigative Committee widened the net on Thursday with its announcement of plans to inspect all large markets across the country for "corrupt ties" to authorities, particularly law enforcement officials, the agency's spokesman Vladimir Markin said in a statement on the agency's website.

Late Wednesday, investigators opened a criminal case on negligence charges against a third police officer, who heads the Ochakovo-Matveyevsky police precinct, over his failure to stop Saturday's beating, Investigative Committee said on its website. He and the other two policemen charged face up to five years in prison.

The swift reaction by investigators follows on the heels of Putin's orders to step up the fight against illegal migration and its corrupt ties to authorities, which he voiced at a Kremlin meeting late Wednesday.

Putin blamed the "slow pace" of the fight of law enforcement officials against illegal migration for the "low level of trust" that people have in the authorities, the Kremlin's website reported.

Alexander Verkhovsky, director of the Sova think tank, which tracks xenophobia and extremism, said authorities were exploiting anti-migrant sentiment to build support for themselves.

"This is a public show in order to demonstrate that authorities are fighting illegal migration," Verkhovsky said by telephone, referencing the rude treatment of market workers during raids, with police ordering them to lie on the ground, pressing them against walls and twisting their hands behind their backs as they do with criminal suspects.

While some immigration violations have been uncovered during the raids, many other workers have been found to be Russian citizens, prompting some to say the police response has been exaggerated.

The two suspects in Saturday's attack are Russian citizens from the North Caucasus, as are many other market workers who have been caught up in the raids.

One local seller from the Matveyevsky market told the nationalist website Russkaya Planeta that there was more than meets the eye in Saturday's attack, lending credence to Putin's suspicions about corruption at markets.

According to the seller, the police at the center of the incident had extorted money from the suspected attackers, and their refusal to pay up prompted police to threaten to give them "problems."

A few days later, local police came to detain their relative as a suspected rapist, family friend Azima said.

Rasulov, the man accused of inflicting the most damage in the attack and who was able to flee the scene, now faces police accusations of taking part in a 2011 murder in the Moscow region as part of a criminal scheme robbing trucks, Izvestia reported, citing a source "close to the situation."

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

Related articles:

- 1,000 Detained Immigrants Held in Tent Camp
- Market Gets the Ax After Mob Attack
- City-Wide Market Inspections Extended

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/08/01/investigators-launch-check-into-corruption-at-markets-a26399