

Greenpeace Condemns Senegalese Forceful Seizure of Russian Trawler

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Greenpeace has denounced the use of force by Senegalese officials during the seizure of a Russian trawler suspected of illegal fishing.

"Even a violation of the law, should it have taken place, should not have resulted in such a disproportionate use of force," Greenpeace said in a statement, Interfax reported Tuesday.

Greenpeace said it condemned the use of force against "peaceful people" and advocated a "peaceful dialogue" and "correct treatment" though it did not know whether the "Oleg Naydyonov" had in fact violated Senegal's exclusive economic zone at the time of its seizure.

Earlier on Monday, Russian Federal Fisheries Agency head Andrei Krayny accused the environmental organization of having been involved in the incident and told Dozhd television that Senegal had been "egged on" by Greenpeace.

Two years ago, Greenpeace activists painted the words "pillage!" and "plunder!" on the ship's hull while sailing through Senegalese waters, accusing it of illegal fishing.

An inspection of the ship after its seizure found there had been no violations, RIA Novosti said, but the trawler's crew, its cargo of 900 tons of fish- worth about \$540,000- and the trawler itself were still being held at a military base near the country's capital Dakar on Tuesday afternoon.

According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the trawler was fishing in the exclusive economic zone of neighboring Guinea-Bissau.

Federal Fishing Agency's representative in Senegal Alexander Biryukov said the order to seize the Russian trawler may have come from the the country's fishing minister.

"The minister has that authority in reference to fishing vessels and he maintains a rather hard-line position in the incident involving our ship," Biryukov told journalists on Monday, Interfax reported.

He said that the head of Senegal's fishing agency is also the leader of the country's green party.

The Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry said Monday the incident could negatively impact relations between the two countries and requested the "immediate release" of the vessel.

"The brute and aggressive actions of the Senegalese officials ... created a real threat to the lives and health of the crew members and have caused significant material damage to the ship's owner," the ministry said.

Russian officials were set to meet with their Senegalese counterparts on Tuesday to try to resolve the situation.

Illegal fishing, mostly by ships from the former Soviet bloc, costs Senegal 120 billion CFA francs (\$250 million) a year, according to official figures, Reuters reported.

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