

Ukraine's Police Crack Down on Nationalist Right Sector After Death Threats

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Oleksandr Muzychko was wanted in Russia for alleged war atrocities.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry has started a sweep of arrests against the nationalist Right Sector organization, after its activists threatened revenge for the police killing of one of their leaders, Oleksandr Muzychko, a news report said.

Police were scouring Kiev's Independence Square — the center of political protests that toppled Ukraine's previous administration — where some Right Sector activists were still staying in a tent camp, an unidentified ministry official said, RIA Novosti reported.

The checks had been ordered by Interior Ministry Arsen Avakov, the official said, after a Right Sector leader in the western Ukrainian city of Rivne, Roman Koval, promised to "take revenge on Avakov for the death of our brother" on Tuesday.

In other raids around the country, Right Sector leaders in the central Ukrainian region

of Poltava were also detained, the organization said in a statement, Interfax reported.

The Right Sector said that police dispersed a rally by its activists in front of the local Interior Ministry branch on Tuesday, detaining the organization's leader for eastern Ukraine and regional coordinators. The men, detained on suspicion of illegal weapons possession, were unarmed, the statement added.

In the western Ukrainian region of Lviv, Right Sector political adviser Vitaliy Serhayuk said that the branch has decided to disband the unruly factions that had joined the umbrella organization, and impose "harsh discipline" in their paramilitary formation.

Muzychko, whose organization played an active role in Ukraine's political protests of the previous months, was shot to death in Rivne on Tuesday, during what the Interior Ministry said was an attempt to resist arrest.

In response to the "public resonance" of the event, Avakov said on his Facebook page Wednesday that he was ready to make his ministry's internal investigation on the shooting as transparent as possible and questioned the patriotism of those in self-organized militia groups. He questioned "Bandits are threatening a minister?" adding, "I accept this challenge."

Avakov's statement then provided a chronology of the chase that led to Muzychko's arrest and death, in which the ultra nationalist leader and members of Ukraine's Sokol, or Falcon, forces exchanged fire. When the Interior Ministry caught up to Muzychko he was found with a gun lying under him and wounds in his chest, Avakov said. He was pronounced dead by doctors when they arrived on the scene.

The ultranationalist coordinator, also known as Sashko Bely, had fought against Russian troops during the first Chechnya war of 1994-96, and was wanted in Russia for alleged war atrocities. Ukraine's new government also issued a warrant for his arrest for the assaulting a Rivne prosecutor in February.

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