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8 Ex-Cops Sentenced in Notorious Tatarstan Torture Case

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Eight former police officers in Russia's republic of Tatarstan received lengthy prison terms Monday for torturing suspects, including one case in which the victim died.

A local court sentenced the men to terms ranging from two years to 15 years for torturing suspects at the Dalny detention facility in the Tatarstan capital of Kazan. They were all convicted of abusing their authority and causing grievous bodily harm resulting in death.

The Dalny precinct gained notoriety in March 2012 when 52-year-old Sergei Nazarov died from injuries sustained in custody. Investigators determined that he had been raped with a champagne bottle while in detention.

In the wake of that incident, dozens of other people came forward to complain about the behavior of the Kazan police, prompting the resignation of the Tatarstan police chief, Rustem Kadyrov.

Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said in a statement after the sentencing

that the men "had a smooth-running criminal operation for getting the desired testimony" from suspects in custody.

The investigation took nearly two years, with 18 criminal cases opened into the Dalny precinct relating to 24 different crimes and more than 150 witnesses questioned, Markin said.

"With impunity, the police officers became so brazen that they used violence as a means of receiving the desired testimony, not only in relation to suspects, but also to witnesses and even victims," Markin said.

"If there was an unsolved theft, they would summon a person to the precinct who they would then immediately be deemed guilty," Markin said, adding that if the person refused to confess, they would face torture. The exact number of victims in the case was not disclosed.

Two other former officers were convicted in late 2012 after admitting their guilt. The eight sentenced Monday had denied their involvement to the very end.

Ainur Rakhmatullin, the former head of the department for wanted fugitives, got eight years in a maximum-security prison, while his deputy Almaz Vasilov got 15 years. Fail Sabirzyanov, the former deputy head of the police department, got 12 years in a high-security prison. Those three were singled out by investigators as the "most brutal and amoral" in their crimes.

Two other officers were given ten-year sentences, while another two got six years and four years, respectively.

The lightest sentence handed down in the case was two years in a penal colony.

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