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Tajik Labor Group Head Denies Report of Mass Rally by Migrants

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Karomat Sharipov, the head of Russia's Tajik Labor Migrants association.

The head of a Tajik labor association denied media reports Wednesday that migrant laborers were planning a 100,000-strong rally to protest the "slave-like" working conditions in Moscow.

The Izvestia newspaper earlier cited Karomat Sharipov, who heads the the Tajik Labor Migrants association, as saying that organizers intended to file a petition with City Hall to stage the mass protest in October.

But Sharipov later said his words had been twisted, telling ITAR-Tass that "journalists have a good imagination."

Migrant workers are intending to meet to discuss the working conditions in Russia at a congress planned for October, but they will only apply for permission to stage a rally if their

grievances are not addressed, Sharipov added.

The Izvestia report said the rally would demand an end to miserable working conditions and a backlog of unpaid wages at the capital's markets.

"According to our information, at 12 of Moscow's markets, thousands of Tajiks are effectively kept in slavery," Sharipov was quoted by Izvestia as saying. "They are not paid their wages, their documents are taken away, they are kept locked up on the properties of Moscow's markets."

Supervisors at some of Moscow's sprawling market complexes charge their foreign laborers 5,000 rubles ($140) each for a bunk bed on its grounds, even if the men have dwellings outside the compound. Other workers are barred from venturing outside of the market, Sharipov was quoted as saying.

Administrators at the Moskva, Mezhdunarodny and Sadovod markets, which Sharipov specifically singled out for criticism, have said migration service inspectors hold checks at their compounds several times a month, making it impossible to conceal the presence of thousands of illegal foreign workers.

An unidentified advertising employee at Sadovod, where hundreds of unauthorized workers were rounded up last year after police raids, said his office was "hearing for the first time" that unregistered migrant workers were being held on the market's territory, Izvestia reported.

A spokesperson for Mezhdunarodny said the market employed about a dozen foreign laborers and that all of them had work permits, the report said.

See also:

Migrant Workers Plan 100,000-Strong Rally to Protest 'Slave-Like' Conditions in Russia

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