

Criminal Case Launched Over Demolition of Moscow's Historic Wooden Buildings

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Three historic wooden buildings near Moscow's Sokolniki Park have been illegally demolished, and city authorities want justice, officials said in a statement released Monday.

The buildings, constructed at the start of the 20th century, were granted protected status by city authorities.

Development firm "Ars Servis Luks" assumed responsibility for maintaining the buildings in 2002. But in light of the buildings' demolition, the firm has violated the terms of the agreement it signed with the preservation of cultural heritage department and has severely altered its design, according to a statement released Monday by the City Hall's department for the preservation of cultural heritage.

"A 547-square meter cultural and historical monument was destroyed by the user and replaced with a concrete building, constructed without authorization," it said.

If found guilty those responsible may face up to two years in jail, according to the Russian Criminal Code. A police investigation has been launched into the case, the statement said.

Sixty historic buildings have been demolished in Moscow since its current Mayor Sergei Sobyanin assumed office in 2010, according to a list compiled by architectural watchdog Arkhnadzor, published at the start of September.

In July, the Prosecutor General opened a criminal case after another historic building was demolished — this time in central Moscow on Yakimanka.

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