

# Outspoken Actor Alexei Devotchenko Found Dead in Moscow

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Actor and opposition activist Alexei Devotchenko has been found dead at his apartment.

Acclaimed theater actor and opposition activist Alexei Devotchenko has been found dead in a pool of blood at his apartment in northeastern Moscow, news reports said.

Devotchenko, 49, was discovered with slashes on his body, unnamed police sources were cited as saying by news agency LifeNews, which has strong links to the Russian security services.

An early report by state news agency TASS quoted a law enforcement source as saying the death appeared to be violent, though the Investigative Committee later denied this in comments to Interfax.

Devotchenko, who also suffered a head injury before his death, had been drinking heavily and could have had a heart attack, a police source told Interfax.

But this would not account for the blood at the scene, and LifeNews quoted police as saying Devotchenko had smashed a glass cupboard with his bare hands in a drunken rage before losing consciousness from the blood loss.

The St. Petersburg-born actor made his screen debut in 1990 and during the course of his career starred in about 50 roles — most of them in the supporting cast — including in several highly popular television crime drama series.

But his acclaim stemmed mostly from his stage work, which included turns at the prominent Moscow Art Theater and St. Petersburg's Alexandrinsky Theater.

During his career, he won three Golden Spotlights — St. Petersburg's top theater prize — and two prestigious State Prizes.

In 2011, Devotchenko said he would renounce the State Prizes in protest of the Kremlin's policies, though he was unable to do so formally because the prize's rules do not allow for this.

Devotchenko was also a longtime member of United Civil Front, a liberal opposition movement headed by former chess player Garry Kasparov.

Devotchenko attended protest rallies in the 2000s, when doing so was still a fringe affair, and was a prominent figure at the record anti-Kremlin protests in 2011-13. In 2012, he claimed he was attacked in the street by a group of men who took offense at his "unmanly" ear piercing, though the matter was not investigated by police.

Devotchenko also campaigned for LGBT rights, opposed Gazprom's plan to construct a giant tower in St. Petersburg — which threatened to have the city struck from UNESCO's World Heritage list — and spoke out against Russia's alleged meddling in Ukrainian civil strife.

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