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Authorities Investigate 'Professional' Attack on Russian Journalist

By Anna Dolgov

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Prosecutors in central Russia have opened an investigation into the beating of a journalist in what constitutes the second attack against a publication known for its reporting on corruption cases.

Sergei Vilkov, who writes for magazine Obshchestvennoye Mnenie, or Public Opinion, said he was beaten on Tuesday by two men he had spotted earlier this week hanging around the courtyard of his apartment building, local Versia news portal reported.

Nothing was stolen from the journalist, and the attackers beat him "professionally," mostly in the face, Vilkov was quoted as saying by Ekho Moskvy radio.

"I was returning home when the two men, letting me pass by them, attacked simultaneously: one tried to knock me down from behind, while the other started to hit me in the face," newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta cited Vilkov as saying on Wednesday.

The case opened by prosecutors in Saratov categorized the attack against Vilkov as "hooliganism," the report said.

But Vilkov said the assault was "unambiguously an act of intimidation," and was connected to the beating of his colleague last summer, Versia reported.

Acclaimed investigative reporter Alexander Krutov, who also writes for Obshchestvennoye Mnenie, was hospitalized in August with a concussion, multiple bruises and a stab wound to the leg after being assaulted by men wielding baseball bats and stilettos, his publication reported at the time.

Vilkov said he intended to file a police report, according to Versia. But while attacks on Russian journalists covering corruption cases are common, the perpetrators are rarely found.

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