The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow Mosque Stormed by Group Calling for Protest at French Embassy

By The Moscow Times

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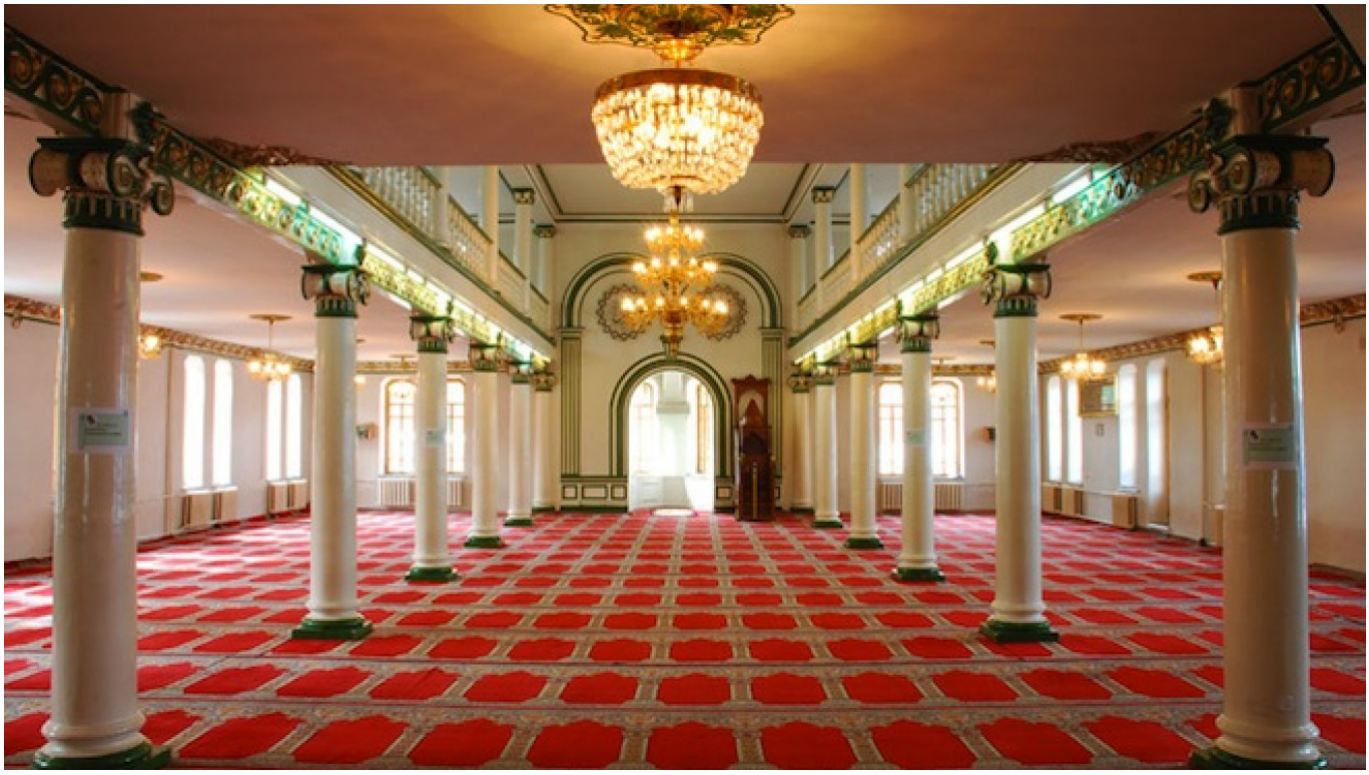

Protesters barged into a mosque calling for worshipers to march to the French Embassy in Moscow.

A dozen protesters barged into a mosque calling for worshipers to march to the French Embassy in Moscow — presumably in connection to a wave of terrorist attacks in Paris last week — and then severely beat a congregant who tried to soothe them, a news report said.

Few details were immediately available on the motives or identity of the participants in the Wednesday afternoon raid at the mosque on Vypolzov street, with a spokeswoman for Russia's Council of Muftis, Gulnar Gaziyeva, only saying that "judging by their appearance, the hooligans were not Russians," the capital's Moskva news portal reported.

"The mosque's congregants quickly managed to thwart their stunt, but when one of the regular congregants stepped out with them outside the mosque, they attacked him and beat him severely," she was quoted as saying, adding that the man had to be hospitalized.

The wave of terrorist attacks in France's Paris last week, including a mass shooting at France's Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine, which has since been claimed by the Yemen branch of al-Qaida, has led to mixed reactions in Russia.

Earlier this week, vandals spray-painted obscenities on the facade of a mosque at Moscow's Poklonnaya Gora war memorial park, while others in Russia have denounced Charlie Hebdo for publishing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad.

Authorities in the predominantly Muslim republic of Chechnya on Wednesday called for a mass rally in the capital Grozny to protest publications that "insult the Prophet Muhammad," according to a statement published on the administration's website.

Although a date has not yet been set for the rally, Chechen authorities promised in the statement that "several hundred thousand people will take part."

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