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# Footballer 'Beaten' Into Leaving Team

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A Montenegrin striker who fell out of favor with his Russian Premier League club Kuban Krasnodar says he was beaten into terminating his contract.

Nikola Nikezic has written to FIFA chief Sepp Blatter claiming he was beaten on March 7 by two men in an office at the club's headquarters in Krasnodar.

Kuban's sporting director Sergei Doronchenko dismissed the allegations as "pure idiocy."

A copy of the letter was posted Tuesday on the web site of the union of Russian footballers and coaches, along with a video message by Nikezic, who said the men who beat him had guns and threatened to "make an invalid" out of him.

"When I replied that my contract has another year to run ... I received a powerful blow to the liver," Nikezic wrote.

He said he signed a contract termination out of fear for his life after being beaten for 20 minutes. Before his attackers made off with the signed documents, Nikezic said they warned him that "a lot of Russians live in Montenegro, and they can always find you or a member of

your family, so don't do anything stupid."

He said a club trainer by the name of Nikolai Khlistunov invited him to sign the termination before the beating. Khlistunov, he said, let him know that "failure to do so could result in me not being able to leave Krasnodar or to return to Montenegro disabled."

Khlistunov wasn't listed on the club's web site, and the club's press service did not immediately respond to written requests for clarification.

Kuban's Doronchenko, however, called Nikezic's claims "wild" in comments carried by the Championat.ru web site, and vowed to sue him.

"It's clear that this football player and his acquaintances just want money from Kuban," Doronchenko was quoted as saying. "We are shocked by such news. ... It's pure idiocy."

The 29-year-old Nikezic, whose contract was to run through November, said he was told he was surplus to requirements at Kuban, and said he was excluded from preseason training in Turkey and even forbidden from working out with Kuban's junior team.

Kuban began its Premier League season on Sunday with a 2-0 home loss to Rubin Kazan.

Kuban president Alexander Tkachyov is also the powerful governor of the Krasnodar region and a close ally of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Coach Dan Petrescu led Kuban to the first division title last season, earning promotion to the Premier League.

Russian football has failed to shrug off its murky reputation with corruption scandals breaking persistently since the Soviet collapse.

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