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# Tajik Dies Waiting at Moscow's Overcrowded Migration Center

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A worker from Tajikistan has dropped dead while standing in line to apply for a Russian work permit at a new migrant-processing center near Moscow. His death comes after a barrage of reports about poor conditions at the Multifunctional Migration Center in Sakharovo.

Komiljon Esanov, 48, had been waiting in line for two days when he became ill, according to Fergana News. By the time an ambulance arrived an hour later he was already dead.

"I think my father died of hunger and thirst while standing in the crowd. We have been queuing for work permits here for several days, and there is no order or system," Esanov's son Dilshod, who was waiting with his father in line, was quoted as saying by the Dushanbe-based Ozodagon news agency.

The Russian authorities have promised to investigate the cause of death.

When the Sakharovo center opened in January, many migrants viewed it as a positive change. Previously they had to go to at least five different sites to have their fingerprints taken, sit a mandatory Russian-language test, purchase health insurance and collect the necessary stamps. Now they can take care of all that paperwork at once.

But the Federal Migration Service's attempt to streamline the process seems to have failed. With over a million Central Asian migrants working in Moscow alone, the center quickly suffered from overcrowding.

The center can only serve 2,000 people per day, but often up to 5,000 migrants wait in line to get their documents sorted. Many arrive as early as 5 a.m. to start queuing.

In January, one Central Asian YouTube user uploaded a short clip of crowds at Sakharovo. It shows a woman being crushed against a metal barrier due to the sheer number of people waiting. A journalist from Novaya Gazeta who went undercover to report from the queue relayed stories of people waiting for days on end in the snow. The head of the Moscow branch of the Federal Migration Service, Olga Kirilova, admitted to journalists in March that the line is the center's "biggest problem."

The situation so alarmed Kyrgyz diplomats that in February the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan sent a strongly worded note to the Russian Foreign Ministry calling for the authorities to investigate allegations of misconduct. Kyrgyz officials who visited the center incognito on Feb. 11 reported long lines and accused security guards of "inappropriate" and "rude" behavior toward migrants.

"The facts indicate the inability of the center to deal with the huge influx of migrant workers," the embassy's statement read. Responding to the allegations, a Sakharovo representative accused the diplomats of making an "unauthorized" visit, but promised an investigation.

Reacting to the swelling crowds of migrant laborers, in March, the center began working round the clock. The Federal Migration Service promises the center will be able to process over 5,000 cases a day by later this year.

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