

Russian Prosecutors Visit Zoo, Leave Trail of Death and Destruction

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Japanese Macaques, like those pictured above, are among the wounded.

A group of prosecutors and veterinary service officials arrived at closing time at a Crimean zoo called Fairytale and quickly set about firing tranquilizer darts at animals.

They targeted a group of monkeys they suspected may have contracted tuberculosis, with the aim of collecting samples from the sleeping animals, according to a blog post on Tuesday by zoo director and prominent local businessman Oleg Zubkov.

The next morning one baboon was dead, according to local media reports. Several other baboons and Japanese macaques were reportedly in grave condition.

A photo published by Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda on Thursday showed a baboon in the zoo lying on its side, apparently dead, on a wooden bench in its cage.

"This new Crimean reality never stops surprising one with its disrespect toward businessmen

and the strangeness of its laws that allow people in uniform to do anything they want," Zubkov wrote.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in March last year following a change of regime in Kiev, and hundreds of businesses on the Black Sea peninsula have since been seized in a messy, and sometimes violent "nationalization" process.

Zubkov, a former Crimean lawmaker and the founder of the zoo based in the Black Sea city of Yalta, said on his blog that the primates who suffered during the inspection were perfectly healthy, and had come from a zoo in the Estonian capital of Tallinn with all appropriate documentation.

Crimea's chief prosecutor, Natalya Poklonskaya, who became a brief Internet sensation last year for her doll-like looks, said Thursday she had been aware of the inspection.

"I was told that all the animals were alive and well! If that's not the case, we will get to the bottom of it," she said, Komsomolskaya Pravda reported.

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