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Inmates Slash Arms in Protest at Prison in Russia's Far East

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More than 30 prisoners cut their forearms in a self-harm protest at a maximum security penal colony in Russia's Far East Amur region, the local branch of the prison service said Wednesday.

Thirty-two inmates "made insignificant cuts" to their forearms during a "riot" at the Vozhayevka village's Correctional Facility No. 2, the statement said.

Russian media reports suggested that the number was much higher. A man claiming to be an inmate at the colony told the Amur.info news website in a phone call that 100 prisoners had cut their arms and were refusing to obey orders to bandage themselves, prompting the prison staff to call in the riot police.

Amur's Public Oversight Commission, which is investigating the incident, said there were reports of 60 self-harming prisoners and said there was also evidence that the protesting inmates were on hunger strike.

Self-harm is regularly resorted to by inmates in Russian prisons as a form of protest against

conditions.

The prison service statement said the riot broke out Wednesday when colony staff used physical force to restrain an inmate who had refused to return to solitary confinement after being let out for exercise.

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