

Zoo Head Calls Crimean Authorities 'Fascists' After Tiger Deaths

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The Skazka zoo's director Oleg Zubkov.

The deaths of two rare lion cubs at a Crimean zoo have sparked a political standoff between the peninsula's prosecutor general and the zoo's head, who has accused local authorities of "fascism."

Oleg Zubkov, the head of the Skazka and Taigan zoos in Crimea, has accused General Prosecutor Natalya Poklonskaya of lying when she denied that authorities took away one of Taigan's generators on Sunday night, the Russian News Service reported Tuesday.

"Behind me, in the dark, is the Taigan park where 2,000 animals and birds will once again have to battle between life and death because someone wanted a generator," Zubkov is seen saying in a video uploaded to YouTube on Sunday.

"I find it hard to explain the behavior of those upon whom this decision depends but I think it's plain fascism," he added. "Real rulers don't behave in this way."

The video then switched to footage reportedly recorded an hour earlier, showing a large generator being hoisted onto a truck and then taken away.

The standoff between Zubkov and the local authorities erupted after the death of a rare Bengal tiger cub at Skazka last week due to hypothermia. Its sibling was reported Monday to also have died at the zoo, but Zubkov said the death cause was still unknown, the TASS agency reported earlier.

Poklonskaya has said both cubs died of intestinal poisoning and accused Zubkov of being criminally liable for the deaths, the Russian News Service reported.

Zubkov said that a court would issue a ruling on the case on Dec. 11, the report said.

Crimea has been suffering electricity shortages after Ukrainian activists blew up the existing power lines from Ukraine several weeks ago.

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