The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow Resident Allegedly Murders Creditors' Representative

By Anna Dolgov

February 05, 2016

A Moscow resident faces murder charges for shooting and killing a representative of his creditors who had arrived at his apartment in the company of court bailiffs to take inventory of the man's possessions, the Investigative Committee said in a statement Thursday.

The bailiffs and an unidentified "plaintiff's representative" showed up at the man's apartment on Frunzenskaya Ulitsa in central Moscow earlier on Thursday, the statement said. As the group was taking inventory, the man allegedly pulled out a handgun and shot the creditors' representative, who died at the scene, the Investigative Committee said.

The alleged shooting was witnessed by court bailiffs, the statement said.

The country's economic decline and the ruble's nosedive has put Russians deeply into debt and left them unable to meet their credit payments.

The total amount of past-due debts in the country increased 48 percent in 2015 from the

previous year, and reached 1.15 trillion rubles (about $15 billion at the current rate), the Vedomosti business daily reported on Jan. 28, citing the nation's Unified Credit Bureau.

Meanwhile, debt collectors have allegedly been using increased force and violence to make Russians pay.

A toddler and his grandparents in central Russia's Ulyanovsk region were injured when a Molotov cocktail was thrown into their home in late January — in an incident the family blamed on a debt collection agency to which they owed money.

The Molotov cocktail attack came a few days after the home's window was smashed by a brick, carrying a note that threatened to burn down the house unless its residents paid up, the family said, tabloid-style LifeNews reported.

Amid growing tensions over unpaid debts, a group of State Duma lawmakers introduced a bill early this month at the lower house of parliament, calling for suspending the activities of debt collectors — who, the authors of the bill argued, operate in a hazy zone, unregulated by laws.

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Original url:
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