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Lawyer for Russian Citizen Detained in Ukraine Disappears Mysteriously

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Russian citizens Alexander Alexandrov (R) and Yevgeny Yerofeyev who were detained on May 16 by Ukrainian forces, look on from a defendants' cage as they attend a court hearing in Kiev, Ukraine, Sept. 29, 2015.

A criminal case has been opened by police in Ukraine's Odessa over the disappearance and suspected murder of Yury Grabowsky — a lawyer for a Russian citizen detained in Ukraine, the TASS news agency reported Thursday, citing an Odessa police representative.

The lawyer wrote on his Facebook page Wednesday that he had left the country "against his will" and for "personal security reasons."

Grabowsky's friends, who have asked the police to launch an investigation into his disappearance, claim that he could not have left Ukraine because his international passport is still in Kiev.

The Goloseyevsky District Court in Kiev postponed Wednesday a scheduled hearing in the case of Alexander Alexandrov and Yevgeny Yerofeyev due to the absence of Alexandrov's lawyer.

"Grabowsky has not contact [us] for two days," said Yerofeyev's lawyer Oksana Sokolovskaya, adding that her phone calls remain unanswered.

Sokolovskaya noted that she had been repeatedly threatened and pressured by the authorities, TASS reported.

Russian citizens Alexandrov and Yerofeyev were detained in the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine last year and accused of illegally crossing the border, illegal possession of weapons and involvement in a terrorist organization. The Russians face life imprisonment if convicted.

Both men plead not guilty to the charges, and their lawyers insist that Russians should be considered war prisoners, as at the time of their arrest, they were employed in the militia of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, TASS reported.

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