The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wrestler Detained for Beating Up Buddha in Russian Republic

April 04, 2016



A wrestler from the southern Russian republic of Dagestan has been detained for allegedly vandalizing a Buddhist temple while visiting the republic of Kalmykia for an athletic tournament, Russian media reported over the weekend.

The freestyle wrestler from Dagestan allegedly posted a video online that showed him urinating at a shrine and kicking a statue of Buddha, prompting an outcry from Kalmykia residents, the government daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported Saturday.

Outraged residents of Kalmykia's capital Elista gathered at the athlete's hotel late Friday night, dragged him outside, forced him to his knees and made him apologize — later posting a video of the tribunal online, the AsiaRussia portal reported.

Police intervened to disperse the gathering, Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported, adding that the athlete has been detained, and the wrestling tournament has been canceled. Dagestan's freestyle wrestling team had not been officially listed among tournament participants, and came to Elista “on their own initiative,” the report said.

The Dagestan Prime Minister Abdusamad Gamidov flew to Elista in the wake of the incident and apologized to Kalmykia's residents, AsiaRussia reported.

Roman Silantyev, who sits on the Russian Justice Ministry's board for advising on religious affairs, suggested the Dagestani athlete may be connected to the Islamic State — a terrorist group banned in Russia — or other extremist organizations, Moscow's Govorit Moskva radio station reported Sunday.

The wrestler should undergo an evaluation to determine whether he may have been drunk at the time of the attack, Silantyev was quoted as saying, adding: “If he was sober, then the wrestler is from Wahhabi brothers.”

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