

Arrests Made After 14 Children Dead in Russian Summer Camp Tragedy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A view of Samozero lake, Karelia

Five people have been arrested at a Russian summer camp following the deaths of 14 children and an underaged instructor in a boating accident in the northern region of Karelia.

The group of 47 children, aged between 12 and 17, were rafting on the Samozero Lake on Saturday June 18 with four instructors from the Samozero summer camp. Two boats were overturned when the party was hit by a sudden storm. A rescue mission began the following day after one survivor raised the alarm at a nearby village. All of the victims are believed to be from Moscow, with 14 of the dead aged under 15.

The camp director is amongst those arrested, with reports claiming that instructors had ignored bad weather warnings and had neglected to notify local authorities of the trip. The Russian media has reported that the majority of the deaths were a result of exposure and lives could have been saved if rescue attempts had begun earlier.

“It all happened because not a single instructor dared to object to their superiors when they were sent rafting despite a gale warning,” a former camp instructor told local newspaper Gubernia Daily.

The camp has officially been closed by authorities. An official day of mourning was announced on Monday June 20 in Moscow and Karelia.

The private summer camp hosted 2,500 children each year, selling three-week packages for 30,000 rubles (\$450). The camp was also regularly used by Moscow authorities to provide trips for children in social care.

Reports have surfaced of dozens of legal claims filed against the camp last year, with parents complaining about poor conditions, lack of staff control, unprepared instructors, low child adult ratios, misbehavior amongst the children and instructors and inadequate food and medical care.

A local official visiting the camp last year said that they found, “shattered tents, wet linen, and a lack of pillows and mattresses.” Novaya Gazeta reported. “After finding out who I was, children started telling me what was going on at the camp,” the official said. “Some of them cried and asked me to take them home. They told me they were hungry, wet and frozen. Many of them were clearly affected by cold.”

“We are going to check on what criteria the camp was chosen by Moscow authorities,” said Investigative Committee representative Vladimir Markin. “The level of staff competence will also be investigated.”

“The camp authorities simply saved money on everything,” politician Dmitry Gudkov posted on his Facebook page. “The main question is: who is to blame? The Moscow authorities should have known about these poor conditions when sending these kids there, but they didn’t want to know. It’s either negligence or corruption: orphans or kids in the social care system are not going to protest,” he wrote.

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