

Staff at Moscow's Ukrainian Center Stage Coup Against Kiev-Appointed Director

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A group of people have seized the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Moscow and are refusing to allow its new Kiev-appointed director, Vladimir Ionov, into the building.

The employees of the center, some of whom are Russian citizens, have blocked Ionov's access to the building, saying they do not recognize Kiev's appointees.

Ukraine's ombudsman in Russia, Vladimir Shreidler, said the employees have changed the locks in the building and appear to have taken control.

"The same person who was shouting that we should not speak Ukrainian in the center and who asked me not to show my Ukrainian documents has locked us out," said Shreidler.

Shreidler claims Ukrainian culture has little to do with the building anymore, most of which has been rented out to businesses.

“The situation is simple: the directors have been sitting here for 15 years. The building is in central Moscow and the money comes from renting it out. The new director is sent from Kiev and these people do not recognize him. They have physically threatened him. Yesterday, when I met with him, they changed the locks to his office,” Shreidler said.

Ionov says the center operates under Russian law and so he is unable to fire the rebellious employees.

“They have taken them down now, but many of the workers had red flags in their offices and portraits of certain leaders of the Russian Federation. They say those are their ideological beliefs,” said Ionov.

“I am the director of the center, sent by the Ukrainian state, and I cannot go inside the building,” he added.

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