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Head of Russian Penal Colony Suspended After Dissident's Torture Allegations

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Sergei Kossiyev / VK

Sergei Kossiyev, the head of Penal Colony No. 7 in Russia's northern Karelia region, has been temporarily suspended due to his possible involvement in the beating of inmate and civil activist Ildar Dadin. Alexander Serov, Kossiyev's deputy, has taken his post as head of the facility while an investigation into the incident is being conducted.

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Officials from Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service say that Kossiyev and his family have been placed under guard due to the publicity surrounding the scandal.

"He was recommended to remove all information about himself and his relatives from social networks, and to go to Segezha [the local town] only when accompanied by a colleague," the Federal Penitentiary source told Gazeta.ru. "There are fears for the lives of his family

members, because they have also received threats over the Internet."

The threats began after activists found Kossiyev's profile on the Vkontakte social network. The profile has since been deleted.

The Federal Penitentiary Service has not denied the use of force and "special measures" against Dadin, but has not yet commented on Kossiyev's alleged involvement. However, in a letter to his wife, Dadin claimed that the head of the penal colony came to his cell with three other employees and beat him for a total of four times that day.

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The medics who examined Dadin after the alleged beating claimed to have found no evidence of trauma, but human rights activists doubt the reports and wish to examine Dadin personally. On Tuesday Mikhail Fedotov, head of Russia's Human Rights Council, sent a letter to the Federal Penitentiary Service requesting that they allow two members of the Council into the colony to meet with Dadin, but so far he has not received such permission.

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