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Russian Police Release French Musician Detained on Extortion Charges

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Police officers and French musician Didier Marouani (C) after he was detained in a Sberbank branch.
Artyom Geodakyan / TASS

Moscow police have released Didier Marouani, frontman of the French musical group Space, and his Russian lawyer, Igor Trunov, from custody, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

The pair were detained Tuesday night after notorious Russian pop singer Filipp Kirkorov pressed extortion charges against them.

"At 5 a.m., Marouani and Trunov returned home. Police officers apologized to them," Trunov's lawyer, Lyudmila Aivar, told Interfax. Law enforcement has decided not to open a criminal case against them, she added.

Marouani and Trunov were arrested at a Moscow bank, where they were supposed to meet Kirkorov to sign a settlement agreement. According to Trunov, Kirkorov agreed to pay Marouani 1 million euros for plagiarizing his music. Kirkorov, in turn, insisted that Marouani came to Moscow in order to extort this money from him. Accusations of plagiarism were slander, he said.

Kirkorov's lawyer, Alexander Dobrovinsky, told Interfax there were no plans to settle. Instead, the Russian singer brought extortion charges against Marouani.

"We participated in a sting operation," Dobrovinsky said. According to Dobrovinsky, he and Kirkorov arrived at the bank on Tuesday evening and gave Marouani and Trunov the first part of the 1 million euros. After this, Marouani and Trunov were immediately arrested by police.

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