

Russian Student Turned IS Fighter Found Dead in Prison

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Mohammed Badra / Reuters

A Russian student convicted of fighting for Islamic State in Syria has died in prison just days before he was due to be released.

Ruslan Saifutdinov, a former medical student, was given a three-year sentence for fighting as a mercenary in 2015, the Znak news site reported. The court found that he had taken money in return for fighting against Russian government forces in Syria.

The Kurgan Investigative Committee is now looking into reports that Saifutdinov, who had been due to be released on parole Jan. 18, was beaten to death in prison.

Fellow prisoners at Kurgan region penal colony number one previously told human rights activists that Saifutdinov was beaten by prison guards, who told him that “an enemy of the state had no need of freedom,” and that he “would not leave the prison.”

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The accusations come just weeks after [Russian activist Ildar Dadin](#) claimed in a letter to his wife that he had experienced systematic torture at the hands of penal colony authorities. Dadin was subsequently transferred to another prison in Russia's remote Altai region.

Ruslan Bursin, a spokesperson for the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service, told Znak that there were no apparent signs that Saifutdinov had met with a violent death.

As of July 2016, some 2,000 Russian nationals were believed to be fighting alongside the Islamic State, [according to the Russian government](#).

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