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Russian Security Services Allegedly Torture Student for Waving Ukrainian Flag

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Interior Ministry

Agents of the Russian security services have allegedly beaten a Moscow State University graduate student for hanging a homemade Ukrainian flag from his dormitory window.

The student, who has not been identified, made the flag from two pieces of fabric and waved it out the window in the direction of a March 18 rally commemorating the third anniversary of the annexation of Crimea.

The one-man demonstration was not intended to be political, the MediaZona website reported, citing statements by the grad student and his friend. Rather, the student claims he intended to draw attention to the fact that state funds were being spent on the festival, while the the university could not afford to renovate its dormitory, which is infested with rats, cockroaches and bed bugs.

However, law enforcement failed to see a distinction. A dormitory security guard stopped the student when he moved the protest to a stairwell window, where he believed the flag would be more visible. Soon an officer of the university's police force arrived with three plainclothes Federal Security Service (FSB) officers.

The law enforcement officials forcibly brought the student to his room, where they confiscated his camera, mobile phone, and laptop, and then took him to the local office of the Interior Ministry.

There, the police officer left the student with the FSB officers, who began to aggressively interrogate him. During the interrogation, they hit him on the head with an open palm and jabbed him in the torso with a sharpened mop handle, "which left cuts and abrasions," the grad student's friend told MediaZona.

After two hours, the FSB agents forced the student to write a statement that he agrees to work as an informant for the FSB and the Interior Ministry's anti-extremism center under the codename "graduate student." Then, they returned his computer, phone, and camera, and left.

Next, three police officers entered the room and forced the grad student to write a confession that he had waved the flag and used obscenity. The police then issued the student a fine for "petty hooliganism," and released him.

On March 20, the student visited a trauma clinic, where doctors recorded his injuries. Today, he appealed for help from Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

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