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Moscow Officials Tally Racist Football Attacks Ahead of World Cup

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Moskva News Agency

Nearly 100 cases of racism have been recorded between 2014 and 2016 at football stadiums across Moscow, the Russian capital's chief human rights ombudswoman said Thursday.

International football and UN officials have voiced concerns over Russia's efforts to combat racism as the country prepares to host the 2018 World Cup. Moscow-based racism-monitoring group Sova Center recorded more than 200 acts of racism committed by Russian fans between 2012 and 2014.

Moscow human rights ombudswoman Tatyana Potyayeva told reporters on Thursday that 21 of the recorded 99 acts of racism, discrimination and xenophobia constituted a "real attack."

"This applies to Russian fans and teams," Potyayeva said as quoted by the Interfax news agency.

She suggested that Russia make use of observers to oversee matches for incidents of racism or

discrimination. “This person informs the referee and the match can be paused. If the conflict is not resolved, the match can be suspended,” the ombudswoman said.

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The head of the Moscow Department of Sport and Tourism said authorities would apply “a complex of measures” to battle discrimination during football fixtures.

He pointed out that no acts of racism were recorded during the FIFA Confederations Cup that four Russian cities hosted last summer.

State-run TASS news agency quotes Potyayeva as saying that UN and FIFA officials are expected to attend the Moscow City Duma’s anti-racism roundtable on Sept. 29.

Moscow is one of 11 far-flung Russian cities that will host millions of fans from across the world from June 14 to July 15, 2018, during the World Cup.

The Russian Football Union (RFU) created the position of anti-racism inspector two years ago in an effort to combat xenophobia among Russian football fans.

FIFA also established an anti-discrimination monitoring network in 2015 to deploy its observers at qualifying matches for the 2018 World Cup and the 2017 Confederations Cup.

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