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Russian Blogger Accuses Heathrow Airport of Racism After 'Humiliating' Detention

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Radmila Khakova **Facebook**

A Russian woman who was detained during a layover in London earlier this month has accused Heathrow Airport authorities of racism over her treatment.

In a post on Facebook, Radmila Khakova, an ethnic Tatar, wrote that she had been detained during a 20-hour layover at Heathrow while coming back from a friend's wedding in France. She said she was placed in an migrant detention center after asking airport authorities if she could leave the airport's transit zone to stay at a hotel during her wait.

"After 'accommodating' me inside a jail instead of a hotel, they repeatedly asked me: 'Are you happy?'. You may find this humorous, but it was as humiliating as the rest of the procedure," Khakova wrote on Tuesday.

The popular internet blogger said she had reason to believe that she was detained due to

“racism and class hatred, as well as the feelings of absolute power and impunity” of the employees at Heathrow Airport.

“I didn’t look like them, and, unfortunately, didn’t speak English as well as them, nor did I possess any ‘identifying’ signs that I belonged to ‘their class’,” she said.

“They asked me ‘what is Tatarstan?’ several times,” Khakova wrote, referring to the Muslim-majority Russian region where she is from.

“I want to know why I spent time in prison and was deported like a criminal,” she added.

Khakova has asked the British Council, and the Russian and British Embassies for assistance and is looking for a lawyer to defend her interests. The Russian Embassy in the U.K. told the RBC business portal that it had sent letters to the British authorities asking them to clarify the circumstances of Khakova’s case.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called attention to the story on her own Facebook page.

“Perhaps [Foreign Secretary] Boris Johnson will pay attention,” she wrote.

“After all, we could be talking about discrimination on the basis of nationality!”

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