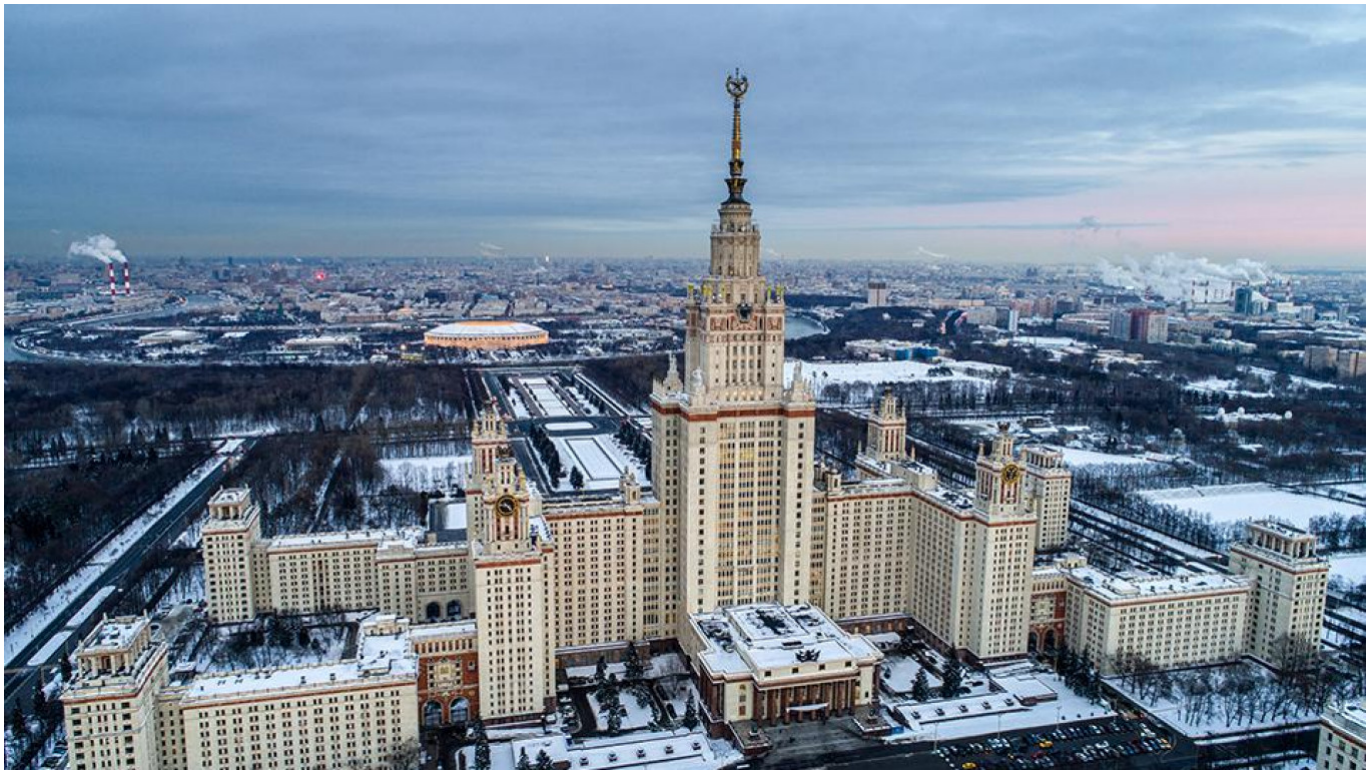
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Moscow Students Accuse FIFA of Ignoring World Cup Fan Zone Protests

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Sergey Bobylev / TASS

Students at a prestigious Moscow university have accused the world football governing body FIFA of ignoring their appeals against a 2018 World Cup fan zone near their campus that they say will severely disrupt academic life.

Russia will host this summer's tournament in 11 cities featuring specially designated "FIFA Fan Fest" venues. Moscow State University students have expressed anger over the organizers' plans to set up a 40,000-capacity fan zone near their university and criticized the university administration for ignoring their pleas.

Related article: Russian Students Face Eviction During World Cup to House Security Forces

An organized group of students and employees from Moscow State University said Monday that FIFA had failed to reply to two appeals against the fan zone filed in the past year.

Students said their protests were met with “misinformation and intimidation” from the university administration after attempts to reach out to the rector over their concerns.

“Perhaps FIFA is ignoring the problem in the interests of their sponsors, who need good visuals for television coverage,” the action group wrote in an online statement received by The Moscow Times.

In their letter, the group cites noise and security concerns “that will have a severe, negative effect on the university’s educational and research activities,” including shortened exam sessions and a collapse in transport infrastructure.

In an interview with the Kommersant business daily on Monday, action group member Artyom Yegorov said that the students planned future protests against the fan zones.

“We’re going to go further, to officials who have the authority to move the fan zone from the walls of Moscow State University,” Yegorov was cited as saying.

The student activists have reached out for help from the international community in the hopes that “a public uproar in the international student, academic and football communities will help reach” FIFA.

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