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Russian Official Apologizes to Protesters on his Knees After Dozens Die in Shopping Mall Fire

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Sergei Tsivilev **Danil Aikin / TASS**

A senior official in Russia's Kemerovo region was filmed apologizing to a crowd of protesters on his knees, hours after accusing a man, who lost five family members in the fire, of self-promotion.

The Kremlin announced a day of mourning for Wednesday after at least 64 people, most believed to be children, were killed at the Winter Cherry mall fire in Kemerovo on Sunday. An estimated 1,500 residents gathered outside of the Kemerovo region administration building on Tuesday, demanding information about the number and names of victims and calling for the resignation of the mayor and regional government.

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in Siberia

On Tuesday, Kemerovo deputy governor Sergei Tsivilev was filmed getting on his knees in front of a crowd of protesters, saying: "I ask for forgiveness from the people who found themselves in this difficult situation."

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>
> — Дмитрий Смирнов (@dimsmirnov175) March 27, 2018

Hours earlier, Tsivilev was filmed accusing a protester in the crowd of exploiting the tragedy for "self-promotion."

"My younger sister, Sabadash Alyona Igorevna, died [in the fire]," the man replied.

"My wife, Vostrikova Yelena Sergeyevna [died]; three children: seven, five, two years old [died]. And I came here to seek publicity?" the widower, Igor Vostrikov, retorted in a tense exchange on the steps of the administration building.

Meanwhile, Kemerovo region governor Aman Tuleyev, 73, "personally" apologized to President Vladimir Putin for the tragedy but declined to meet the hundreds of furious residents demanding his resignation.

"These aren't the victims' relatives at all, these are people who always stir trouble," Tuleyev told Putin during a briefing in Kemerovo earlier in the day.

The FlashSiberia news agency cited anonymous regional officials as saying that Tuleyev is expected to be dismissed after an investigation.

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