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Cossacks Threaten to Hunt Down Activists Who Identified Vigilantes at Moscow Protest

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Moscow Activist / Facebook

A group of self-identified Cossacks has reportedly issued a "vendetta" against activists who published a list of vigilantes involved in the beating of opposition demonstrators earlier this month.

The Cossacks were filmed beating anti-government protesters on the streets of Moscow at a demonstration against Putin's inauguration on May 5. Shortly after, a Telegram channel was created by activists to identify the Cossacks in the videos.

Related article: Russian Activists Beaten by Cossacks Go to Court

"They're collecting dirt on us, trying to build a criminal case, and simply harassing us

online," Russia's Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper quoted Viktor Oleynik, one of the channel's founders, this week.

The publication cited social media posts naming Olyenik alongside partners Anton Gromov and Denis Petrov as "enemies of the state."

In addition to links to the founders' public profiles, the posts reportedly embellish the targets' biographies with claims of U.S. citizenship and property that they visit on private jets.

"We believe that this could be part of a big provocation aimed at rupturing society and legitimizing street violence as an element of political struggle," Oleynik told Nezavisimaya.

"We understand that since the police didn't stop them on Pushkin Square when they were injuring unarmed people with [leather whip] nagaikas, there's certainly no help in sight for us."

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