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Gulag Historian Detained on Pedophilia Charges

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Sergei Koltyrin / Facebook

A gulag historian in northwestern Russia has been reportedly detained on suspicion of pedophilia.

The Karelia Investigative Committee announced Tuesday that it had apprehended two unidentified men it suspects of committing acts of pedophilia in September. The sentence carries a maximum prison term of 15 years.

Local media reported Wednesday that the head of a regional museum, Sergei Koltyrin, 65, and his acquaintance Yevgeny Nosov, 39, were placed in pre-trial detention until Nov. 27.

Koltyrin has led Karelia's Medvezhyegorsky museum, which has staged annual commemorations of the Soviet execution of 9,500 gulag prisoners in the forest of Sandarmokh, since 1991.

The Karelia administration stopped taking part in the commemorations for the first time in

two decades in 2016.

Koltyrin's case has been compared to the prosecution of Yury Dmitriyev, the head of the regional branch of the Memorial human rights group and also a gulag historian in Karelia.

Related article: A Gulag Historian Returns to Prison

Dmitriyev, who had exposed mass Stalin-era killings, was cleared of child pornography charges last spring. He was placed in pre-trial detention until Oct. 26 on new charges of sexual violence after the regional supreme court reversed Dmitriyev's acquittal.

Local journalist Gleb Yarovoy disputed media reports that describe Koltyrin as Dmitriyev's colleague.

"The only thing that united them was that both... denied the fables of Karelian 'historians' that Sandarmokh could be a Soviet POW grave," he said in a Facebook post.

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