

Amnesty Rights Worker Tells of Violent Abduction in Russia

By [Reuters](#)

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Oleg Kozlovsky / Twitter / MT

A researcher for Amnesty International has described how he was abducted in southern Russia by men who drove him to a field where they held a gun to his head, made him take off his clothes, beat him, and tried to blackmail him.

Speaking after his release, Oleg Kozlovsky, 34, said he was abducted on Oct. 6 in Ingushetia, a majority-Muslim region around 1,500 km south of Moscow, currently in the grip of public protests over a land swap deal with neighboring Chechnya.

Kozlovsky said his abductors wore dark baseball caps and medical masks and did not identify themselves.

"One of these people put my head down, took out a gun and put it to the back of my head and said he would shoot me," Kozlovsky told Reuters, saying the men had tried to blackmail him

into working as an informer for police tasked with tackling cases of extremism, an offer he refused.

Reuters interviewed Kozlovsky on Thursday, but held his story until Monday to allow him and his family to take security measures.

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Kozlovsky filed a statement to Russia's Investigative Committee on Oct. 9, but had not received a response by Monday.

The Investigative Committee and local branches of the Federal Security Service and Interior Ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

Kozlovsky went to Ingushetia on Oct. 5 to research freedom of assembly in the context of the land swap protests rocking Ingushetia. On the evening of Oct. 6, he said a man knocked on the door of his hotel room in the regional capital Magas and told him a protest leader wanted to speak to him.

He said he was then led to a car and once inside joined by two men who took his phone and started hitting him and asking him who he was and what he was doing.

He was later let out in a field and told to lie down with his hands behind his back and told he would be shot if he tried to run. An object was pressed against his hands, causing him to suspect they might try to frame him for drug or weapons possession, he said.

The men then made him strip, photographed him, and threatened to publish the photos unless he agreed to work for anti-extremism police. After he refused, they tried to ensure he'd stay silent, he said.

"They again put me on the ground, again put the gun to the back of my head, and told me to pray. And then they told me that if I tell anyone about all this, they'll kill my children," he said. He said he agreed to keep quiet.

They then returned his possessions, except his phone and camera and drove him, via his hotel, to an airport complaining about how hard it was to tackle extremism. He flew back to Moscow the next day with a fractured rib.

"I am sure that if they want to, Russian authorities could find them," he said of his abductors. "Of course I don't know if there is such a desire."

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