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Russia Confirms Assault, Extortion Allegations in Europe's Largest Prison

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Alexander Nekrasov / TASS

Russia's prison authority has confirmed reports of abuse at Europe's largest pre-trial detention center days after new video footage renewed concerns about conditions in Russia's penitentiary system.

Russia's prison system has been under scrutiny since mid-2018, when revelations of torture set off nationwide inspections and dozens of legal cases. Last week, a prisoners' rights NGO published video which showed inmates at the 4,000-person detention center in St. Petersburg beating a fellow prisoner with a stick.

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"We're confirming beatings of convicted persons, extortion and criminal irresponsibility, as well as abuse of power," said Valery Boyarinev, the deputy head of Russia's Federal Prison Service (FSIN), on Friday.

The prison that Boyarinev was referring to has been dubbed "Kresty-2," a $290-million remand prison that replaced the notorious 18th-century cross-shaped Kresty Prison in 2017.

The head of FSIN, Gennady Korniyenko, will be briefed about the violations next week for further "procedural and staffing decisions," Boyarinev was quoted as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency.

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