

# Inmates Discovered in Long-Abandoned Moscow Prison Tower – Watchdog

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Butyrka prison **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

At least two inmates have been housed in a tower long thought to be abandoned at the infamous Butyrka prison in central Moscow, the Public Monitoring Commission (PMC) prison watchdog has said.

The 19th-century Butyrka prison has held notable figures behind its bars, from persecuted Soviet-era writers Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Isaac Babel to Adolf Hitler's nephew Heinrich. Officially known as the Butyrskaya pre-trial detention center, Butyrka has long [come under fire](#) for overcrowding, fire safety violations and poor living conditions.

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At least two robbery suspects are awaiting trial in highly unsanitary conditions at one of the three Butyrka towers that were closed down several years ago, a Moscow PMC official [told](#) Interfax on Tuesday. The fourth tower was [converted](#) into a museum almost five decades ago.

The 4-square-meter cell contains a squat toilet, leaking water without a faucet, rotting walls and a steep spiral staircase, according to the official, Ivan Melnikov.

“I don’t understand how they’re delivered food [or how] people walk there because it’s unsafe,” Melnikov was quoted as saying.

Moscow prison officials [defended](#) the inmates’ relocation as a “temporary measure” prompted by ongoing repairs and overcrowding.

Prison management said the prisoners were moved to normal cells Wednesday, Melnikov [told](#) Interfax.

Russian prison officials [announced](#) plans in December 2018 to close Butyrka and relocate its inmates to Moscow’s outskirts as soon as this year.

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