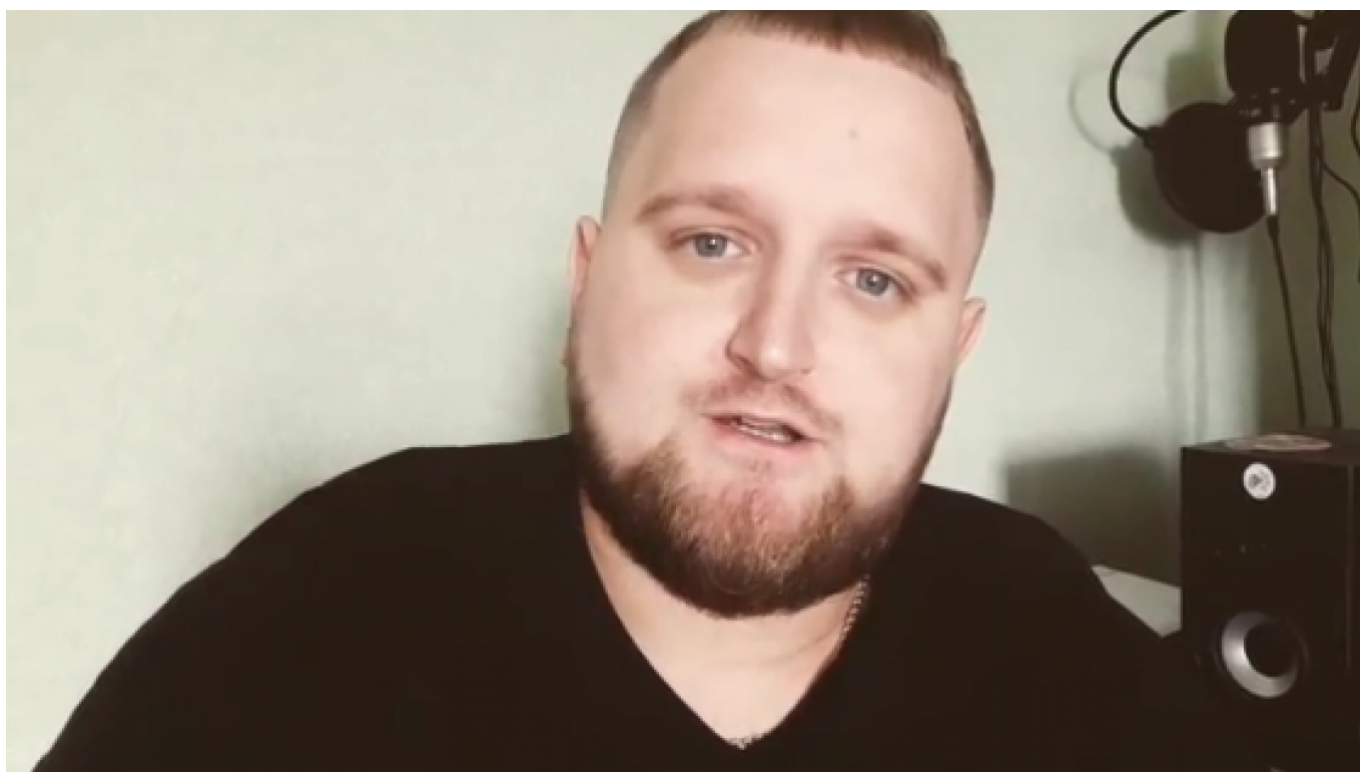


Siberian Journalist Beaten While Investigating U.S.-Sanctioned Chechen Fight Club

June 10, 2021



Andrei Afanasyev had been investigating the local chapter of a sanctioned Chechen mixed martial arts (MMA) club. [antirating / Instagram](#)

A Siberian journalist investigating a U.S.-sanctioned Chechen fight club [said](#) Wednesday that he had been severely beaten by unknown men.

Andrei Afanasyev said at least three people had hit him “with either a pipe or piece of rebar” outside his apartment in the Far East city of Blagoveshchensk 7,500 kilometers east of Moscow.

Afanasyev, appearing on Instagram with a bloodied face and bruised arms, [said](#) doctors diagnosed a broken nose and added that his arms “are in terrible pain, I can barely lift them.”

“Write less reports about decent people,” Afanasyev recounted one of his assailants as telling him, according to Sibir.Realii, a regional affiliate of the U.S.-funded RFE/RL news outlet,

where he works as a freelancer.

The journalist linked the attack to local businessman and pro-Kremlin lawmaker Andrei Domashenkin, whom he named as the founder of a sanctioned Chechen mixed martial arts (MMA) club's chapter in the Amur region.

Afanasyev said he was conducting an investigation into the local Akhmat club, whose leader was detained along with three members in April on suspicion of extorting 8 million rubles (\$111,200) from a local businessman in exchange for their patronage. Russian media [reported](#) that the Akhmat club fighters allegedly took the businessman to the forest and threatened him after he refused their offer.

"I was confused why everyone but this gentleman [Domashenkin] was punished," Afanasyev said in the Instagram video.

The United States in December sanctioned the Akhmat MMA and Absolute Championship Akhmat clubs alongside other entities and people associated with Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who is himself under U.S. sanctions on accusations of human rights abuses.

Local media had [reported](#) in 2016 that Domashenkin, president of the Amur region federation of Thai boxing, or Muaythai, spoke at Akhmat club's opening in Blagoveshchensk.

Afanasyev said in an Instagram video that he heard one of the assailants telling another to "report to Domik," an apparent shorthand of Domashenkin's last name, during his beating.

Sibir.Realii [quoted](#) Domashenkin as saying that "this case is already being handled by law enforcement agencies."

Afanasyev, however, said he does not expect the police to find his attackers and announced plans to pursue them on his own with possible help from eyewitnesses.

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