

Russia Detains Head of Prestigious Private University

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Sergei Zuyev is rector of the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, also known as Shaninka.
Sergei Savostyanov / TASS

The head of a prestigious private Russian university has been detained in connection with a fraud investigation targeting a former senior education official, Russia's Interior Ministry [said](#) Tuesday.

Sergei Zuyev, rector of the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, also known as Shaninka, was taken into custody for questioning Tuesday morning as a suspect in a 21 million-ruble (\$290,000) embezzlement case, the ministry [said](#) in a statement.

Officials said Zuyev's detention is connected to an ongoing investigation into Marina Rakova, a former deputy education minister who was arrested last week on embezzlement charges.

Authorities allege Rakova had lobbied for the allocation of state funds to go toward an education fund that then hired Shaninka and Zuyev as a subcontractor.

“He was interrogated as a suspect in the case of the theft of more than 21 million rubles ... and was detained,” the statement said, adding investigators would shortly petition a Moscow court to extend Zuyev’s detention.

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A spokesperson for the university told the Meduza news site that it is cooperating with the investigation.

After her career in the public sector, Rakova served as vice president of Russia’s biggest lender Sberbank until her arrest last week when she was dismissed.

At least four others — including Rakova’s husband Artur Stetsenko and former Sberbank employees Yevgeny Zak and Maxim Inkin, as well as Kristina Kryuchkova, a professor at the Russian Presidential Academy of Public Administration — have also been named suspects in the case.

Critics of the case, including Alexei Navalny ally Lyubov Sobol, [said](#) they fear Zuyev’s detention could represent an escalation of [pressure](#) on academic freedom in Russia.

Shaninka was founded in 1995 as an experiment to launch British-style higher education in Russia. It offers programs in the humanities, law and social sciences, issuing joint diplomas with the University of Manchester. Its alumni are reported to be among Russia’s highest-earning graduates.

Russian education authorities [revoked](#) Shaninka’s accreditation in 2018 after inspectors deemed it violated education standards. Critics slammed the move as an attempt to clamp down on one of the country’s last independent educational institutions. The university regained accreditation, which gives it the right to issue state diplomas, in 2020.

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