Fire at Russian Cultural Center in Cyprus After Molotov Cocktail Attack

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Firefighters battle a blaze that broke out at the Russian Cultural Center in Nicosia. **Amir Makar / AFP**

A large fire broke out at the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Cyprus' capital Nicosia after a Molotov cocktail was thrown into the building, the state-run TASS news agency [reported](#) Wednesday, citing the institution's head.

"We heard two explosions at around 1:30 p.m. We couldn't connect them with anything at first, but then it turned out that our building had caught fire...According to eyewitnesses, something was likely thrown into the building," another state-run news agency, RIA Novosti, [quoted](#) the center's head Alina Radchenko as saying.

The explosives appeared to target the part of the building where its offices are located, Radchenko said.

Eyewitness videos published online show a tall plume of smoke rising from the building.

The cause of the blaze is still under investigation.

"The entire building has suffered extensive damage," Fire Service spokesman Andreas Kettis tweeted. "The causes of the fire will be investigated in cooperation with the police and, if necessary, other state services."

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The Russian diplomatic mission to Cyprus later [said](#) the fire had been extinguished and reported no casualties.

But the emergency services are continuing to search for any potential victims who may still be trapped inside the building, according to local sources [cited](#) by the Cyprus Times.

In comments to Russian state television, Radchenko later said that the attack could have been a response to the "active pro-Russian work" conducted by the cultural center.

"This is the answer to our firm position and the fact that more and more Cypriots are supporting Russia," she said.

Radchenko claimed without evidence that the local "pro-Ukrainian diaspora" or Western embassies in Cyprus "that are supporting all public figures ready to carry out work against Russia" could be behind the attack.

The center, part of which is wrapped in large bands of red, white and blue paint, the colors of the Russian flag, is operated by the country's embassy.

It was built in 1978 and is located in a separate part of the city from the embassy itself.

There are more than 18,000 Russians and more than 4,600 Ukrainians living on the Mediterranean island, according to official Cypriot government statistics last year.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, European Union member Cyprus has also received around 10,000 Ukrainian refugees.

AFP contributed reporting.

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