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Central Asian Teen Hailed for Saving Dozens from Moscow Concert Hall Attack

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Islam Khalilov **t.me/fcsmtg**

A teenager working as a part-time coat check attendant at Moscow's Crocus City Hall has gone viral for helping dozens of people safely evacuate the building during Friday's deadly attack.

Islam Khalilov, a Moscow high school student whose family comes from the Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, quickly moved to open doors and provide exit directions when he saw a large crowd of people running from the besieged concert hall.

"I realized that if I didn't react, then I would lose my own life and the lives of many others [around me]. To be honest, I was very scared," Khalilov, 15, told Moskva Online, estimating that he guided about 100 people to safety.

"When I was in the crowd and moving toward the door to open it, I thought that someone

might come from the stairs or the escalator and throw a grenade or start firing [at us]. Thank God that didn't happen and I managed to open the door on time and let everyone out," he recalled in the interview.

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Khalilov, who had been working at the venue for about a year before the attack, said he and other staff were trained on how to act in emergency situations, which enabled him to direct the evacuation.

"I don't consider myself a hero. It was simply a part of my job...It is better to sacrifice yourself than to allow hundreds of people to die," Khalilov said in an interview with Ruptly, an offshoot of the state-run news outlet RT.

At least 137 people, including three children, were killed when camouflaged gunmen stormed the concert venue in Moscow's northern suburb of Krasnogorsk and set fire to the building on Friday.

Several public figures heaped praise upon Khalilov after the news of his heroic act went viral.

Morgenshtern, a famous Russian rapper of Turkic Bashkir origin, gifted Khalilov 1 million rubles ($10,785) to thank him for his courage. The teenager said he would use the gift to cover his family's debts.

Moscow's Spartak football club — of which Khalilov is a loyal fan — invited the high schooler to a special meet-and-greet with the team's players and gifted him with a season pass to Spartak's home games.

Russian children's rights commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova on Monday awarded Khalilov and 14-year-old Artyom Donskov, who was also working at the venue during the attack, with an official thank-you letter from the government.

And Russia's Council of Muftis announced Saturday that it would award Khalilov with the Medal for Merit, the highest award of Russia's Islamic community, during this week's Friday prayer at Moscow's Cathedral Mosque.

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