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Kremlin Refuses to Comment on Islamic State Links to Moscow Attack

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Muhammadsobir Faizov, one of the suspected assailant's behind Friday's deadly attack. **Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency**

The Kremlin on Monday refused to comment on the Islamic State's claim that its members were behind the deadly attack on a Moscow concert hall late last week, as rescue workers continued to search for victims who perished in a fire after the music venue was set ablaze.

At least 137 people were killed on Friday when gunmen stormed Crocus City Hall, located northwest of central Moscow, shooting dozens of spectators before setting the building on fire, the deadliest ever attack claimed by Islamic State jihadists in Europe.

"We cannot comment on this in any way. We don't have the right to do that," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists when asked about the jihadist group's suspected involvement in the mass killing.

"We urge you to look at the information coming from our law enforcement agencies," Peskov said.

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He also declined to provide the names of seven people who, along with four other suspects, were arrested on Saturday in connection to the attack.

In a series of late-night court hearings in Moscow that ran into the early hours of Monday, four men, with bruises and cuts over their faces, were dragged into the court in front of dozens of reporters who had assembled at the capital's Basmanny District Court.

The court said two of the defendants had pleaded guilty, and all four were remanded in custody on "terror" charges until at least May 22.

Peskov declined to answer journalists' questions about signs of beating and torture on the four men when they appeared in court, which came after reports and videos on Russian social media of violent interrogations following their arrests.

"I leave this question unanswered," Peskov said.

He also declined to comment on whether the Kremlin had received any intelligence information from Western governments about Friday's mass killing beforehand, as the U.S. Embassy in Moscow warned on March 14 of "imminent plans" by "extremists" to carry out attacks in Moscow.

"Intelligence is never provided to the Kremlin. They are provided through channels from the special service to the special services," Peskov said.

In his only public remarks on the deadly attack, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday pointed to a possible Ukraine connection, and no senior Russian official has yet to comment on the Islamic State's claims.

Officials expect the death toll to rise further, as rescuers were searching Crocus City Hall for remains on Monday, while 97 are still receiving treatment at the hospital.

AFP contributed reporting.

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