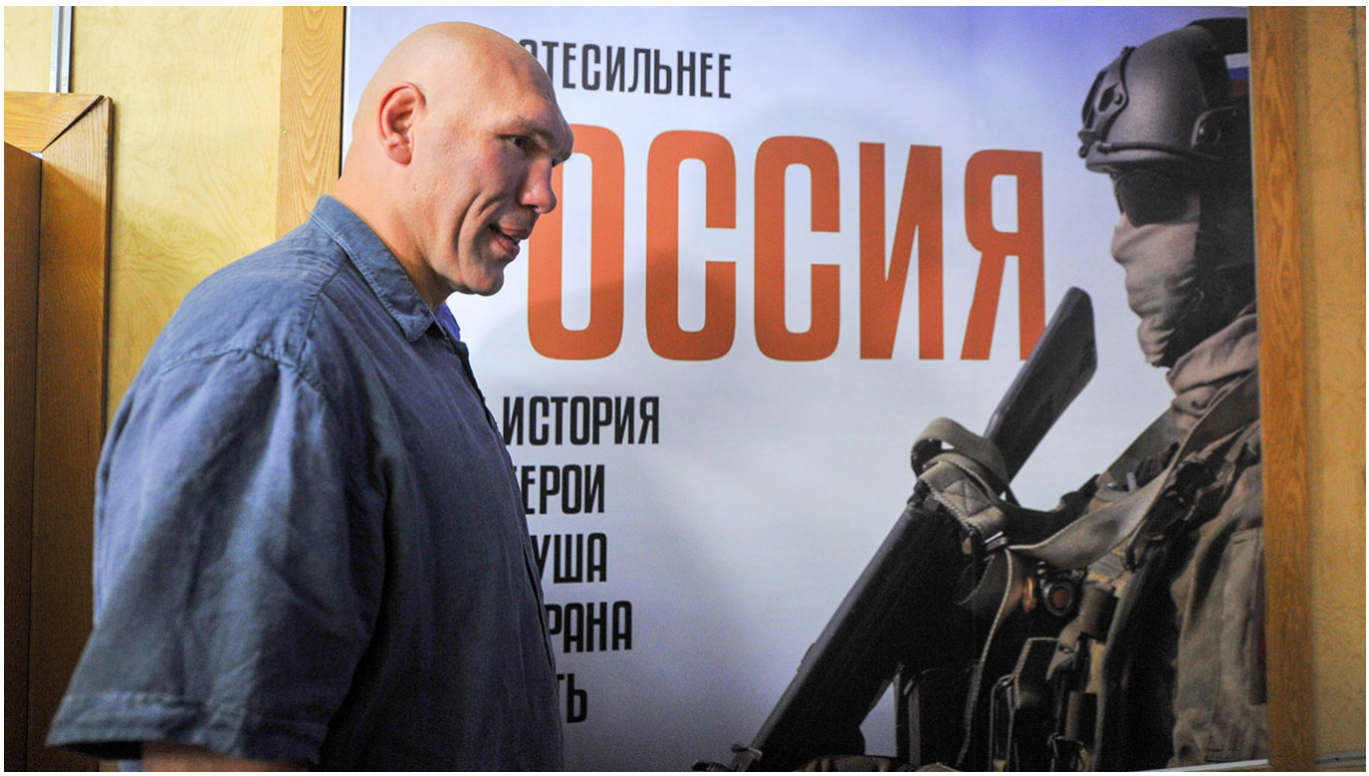
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Azerbaijan Bans Entry to Russian Lawmaker Over 'Offensive' Remarks

February 10, 2025



Russian lawmaker Nikolai Valuev. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Azerbaijan banned Russian State Duma lawmaker Nikolai Valuev from entering the country, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry announced Monday, a move that comes after he suggested the South Caucasian country uses diaspora groups to engage in criminal activities.

"The offensive statements against Azerbaijan and our people made by Nikolai Valuev... and his threatening remarks against our country are absolutely unacceptable," the ministry said. "Due to the statements made by this deputy against Azerbaijan, his name has been added to the list of individuals banned from entering the Republic of Azerbaijan."

Valuev, a former world heavyweight boxing champion, is at least the third Russian lawmaker to be declared persona non grata by Azerbaijan.

Last week, Baku ordered the closure of the local branch of Rossotrudnichestvo, a Russian state-funded cultural diplomacy agency, citing its "lack of legal registration." In response, Valuev suggested that Moscow could target ethnic Azeris in Russia and their financial

transactions.

“Their main tools of influence in Russia are diasporas,” the lawmaker wrote on Telegram. “This entire crowd should be put through the legal filter. Illegal migration, tax evasion, corporate raids and other ‘interesting’ activities will come to light soon enough.”

Related article: Azerbaijan Orders Closure of Russian Cultural Diplomacy Agency in Baku

Azerbaijani media reported last month that Rossotrudnichestvo’s “Russian House” cultural center in Baku harbored Russian intelligence agents, prompting Russia’s Foreign Ministry to summon Azerbaijan’s ambassador in Moscow and dismiss the allegations.

Rossotrudnichestvo head Yevgeny Primakov said the agency would file a defamation lawsuit against BakuTV, which aired the claims.

In a separate move, Azerbaijan also ordered the closure of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) on Thursday, citing a “lack of legal basis” for its operations.

Relations between Moscow and Baku have soured since the Dec. 25 crash of Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243. Investigators said last week that the plane, scheduled to fly from Baku to Grozny in southern Russia, was likely damaged by “external objects” before it hit the ground in Western Kazakhstan.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev has repeatedly said Russian air defense systems accidentally fired at the plane from the ground. Moscow, meanwhile, has denied responsibility for the crash.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/10/azerbaijan-bans-entry-to-russian-lawmaker-over-offensive-remarks-a87931