

Russians Report Nighttime Police Raids in Azerbaijan as Tensions Flare

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Baku, Azerbaijan. **Diana Krotova / Unsplash**

Russian citizens living in Azerbaijan have [reported](#) violent nighttime police raids amid a growing diplomatic rift between Moscow and Baku, according to Kovcheg, an exiled nonprofit that provides support to anti-war Russians living abroad.

Tensions between the two countries [escalated](#) this week following the deaths of two Azerbaijani men during mass arrests tied to unsolved murders in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg last Friday.

“Our subscribers said the police came to them at night and interrogated them, using non-lethal weapons, about the legality of their stay in Azerbaijan,” Kovcheg said.

“Law enforcement authorities are looking for visa violators, compiling lists of Russian emigres and using physical force,” the group wrote on its Telegram channel Wednesday.

Earlier, Russia’s Embassy in Baku [said](#) it had received “many” complaints from Russian

citizens about document checks over the past 24 hours. “Some of them said they and their family members were subjected to physical violence,” the embassy said in a statement.

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At least 10 Russian nationals were arrested in Azerbaijan after the brothers Ziyaddin Safarov and Huseyn Safarov died during the arrests in Russia last week. Russia’s Foreign Ministry [stated](#) that no violations occurred during those mass Yekaterinburg arrests.

Among those arrested in Baku were the editor-in-chief and deputy editor of Sputnik Azerbaijan, the local affiliate of the Russian state-funded news network. On Thursday, Dmitry Kiselyov, head of Sputnik’s parent company Rossiya Segodnya, announced the outlet was shutting down.

Eight other Russians were accused of being part of “organized criminal groups” involved in cybercrime and drug trafficking. Images from court proceedings showed some of the detainees with visible injuries.

On Wednesday, the Kremlin said it had “noticed all the details” in videos showing the arrests and vowed to protect Russian citizens “through diplomatic channels and... all the means available to us.”

Russian media identified several of the men as IT specialists, businesspeople and others whose reasons for being in Azerbaijan were not immediately clear, though authorities have not confirmed this information. Russia’s Embassy in Baku later accused Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry of ignoring its requests to grant consular access to the arrested Russians.

Law enforcement authorities in Baku launched a criminal investigation in response to the Safarov brothers’ deaths and accused Russian police of torture. Russian investigators have placed six ethnic Azerbaijani men in pre-trial detention on murder charges related to Friday’s raids.

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