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Head of Moscow Region's Azerbaijani Diaspora Stripped of Russian Citizenship

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Elshan Ibragimov. **Social media**

The head of the Azerbaijani diaspora in the Moscow region said Friday that Russian authorities revoked his citizenship, adding that he plans to return to Azerbaijan amid a growing diplomatic dispute between the two countries.

A video shared late Thursday by an anonymously run Telegram channel appeared to show officials informing Elshan Ibragimov that his Russian citizenship had been retroactively revoked as of June 18.

The Telegram news channel Ostorozhno Novosti said it confirmed the video's authenticity with Ibragimov, who declined to comment further. Azerbaijani media reported that Ibragimov promised to provide more details after arriving in Azerbaijan "in a few days."

According to anonymous sources cited by the RBC news outlet, Ibragimov was being deported for "actions that threaten Russia's national security."

By Friday afternoon, Ibragimov's biography was removed from the website of the Moscow region's public commission, where he had been listed as the chairman of the regional Azerbaijani cultural autonomy and a member of the regional council for national cultural organizations.

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Tensions between Russia and Azerbaijan hit an all-time low this week following a series of police raids in Russia targeting ethnic Azerbaijanis who are accused of being behind murders dating back to the early 2000s.

Two Azerbaijani men were killed amid mass arrests in the city of Yekteriburg, while six others were charged with murder and attempted murder and placed in pre-trial detention. A local Azerbaijani diaspora leader was also violently detained, then released after questioning as a witness.

Baku has since launched a criminal investigation into the deaths of the two men, accusing Russian police of torture and deliberate killings, while Moscow has accused Azerbaijan of interfering in domestic law enforcement matters.

In apparent retaliation, Azerbaijani authorities said they arrested at least 10 Russian nationals, two of whom work for the Kremlin-funded Sputnik news agency, while the others are accused of cybercrimes and drug trafficking.

Amid the worsening standoff, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Thursday urged calm and blamed "certain outside forces" for attempting to drive a wedge between the "strategic alliance" of the two countries.

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