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Police Issue Arrest Warrant for Azerbaijani Diaspora Leader in Urals

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Shahin Shikhlinski. © **APA**

Russia's Interior Ministry issued an arrest warrant for the head of the Azerbaijani diaspora in the Ural Mountains region, the newspaper Kommersant reported Wednesday.

It remains unclear what charges Shahin Shikhlinski faces, Kommersant wrote, citing a police database of wanted persons. He was violently detained and later released on July 1 as part of an investigation into a series of cold-case murders.

Anonymous sources told Kommersant that investigators suspect Shikhlinski may be linked to an organized criminal group involved in prostitution, pornography distribution and drug trafficking.

His son, Mutvali Shikhlinski, was with him at the time of his detention earlier this month. The son was accused of hitting police with his car and arrested on July 16.

The father and son's legal troubles come amid worsening tensions between Russia and

Azerbaijan following mass arrests of Azerbaijani men in Yekaterinburg on June 27.

Two Azerbaijani men died during those arrests, with authorities in Baku accusing Russian police of torturing and murdering them.

Azerbaijan has since retaliated by canceling Russia-linked cultural events, raiding the offices of the Kremlin-funded Sputnik news outlet and arresting several Russian nationals it accused of involvement in organized crime.

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