The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Balalaika Instructor Arrested in Yekaterinburg for Allegedly Trying to Suffocate Children

November 21, 2025



Artyom Vaganov. **Yulia Grishina / TASS**

A Yekaterinburg court placed a local music teacher in pre-trial detention after he was accused of trying to suffocate children to death, the court's press office said Friday.

Artyom Vaganov, who teaches balalaika at a local school, is accused of inviting children aged 10 to 15 to his apartment and offering them money to let him place plastic bags over their heads in what he allegedly called a test of their breathing.

Police launched an investigation after a video emerged that appeared to show Vaganov holding a bag over a child's face, the local news outlet E1 reported. Some of those sessions allegedly lasted as long as 30 minutes.

Related article: Shuttered Airports Ready to Reopen After Military Approval, Rosaviatsia Says

A school representative told journalists Vaganov had “resigned voluntarily” and that the school was cooperating fully with investigators.

The Leninsky District Court ordered him to be held in pre-trial detention until Jan. 19. That ruling will take effect within three days unless appealed.

Vaganov faces up to life in prison if convicted of the attempted murder of minors. His motive remains unclear, and E1 said it had been unable to reach him by phone.

Some students have since reported other alleged misconduct involving Vaganov, including an instance in which he was said to have touched a child’s genitals under the pretext of treating a cold.

E1 also reported that Vaganov used a social media pseudonym linked to a Soviet-era serial killer who targeted boys.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/11/21/balalaika-instructor-arrested-in-yekaterinburg-for-allegedly-trying-to-suffocate-children-a91205