

## **Police in Moscow Investigate Killing of a Migrant Worker**

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### **Body**

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**MOSCOW** -- The police in Moscow are investigating the killing of a Central Asian migrant worker who was stabbed several times and decapitated in what appeared to be an attack by ultranationalists.

The severed head of the victim, a citizen of Tajikistan, was discovered last Wednesday in a trash bin, wrapped in a plastic bag, the press service for the investigative wing of the Prosecutor General's Office said.

Investigators say the victim and another Tajik migrant worker were attacked on Dec. 6 after they left work at a food warehouse south of Moscow. The newspaper Kommersant cited unidentified police sources, who said the victim was Salekh Azizov, 20, from Vidnoe, also south of Moscow. The second worker escaped but was hospitalized with injuries, the investigators said.

An obscure group calling itself the Militant Organization of Russian Nationalists claimed responsibility for the killing, in an e-mail statement sent to two human rights organizations that monitor hate crimes in Russia. The statement included a photograph of the victim's severed head.

The statement said the killing was "a demonstration of their resolve to fight against the non-Russian occupation, and a warning to officials that the same will happen to them if they do not stop the flow of immigration," said Galina V. Kozhevnikova, a deputy director at the Sova Center, one of the organizations that received the statement.

Millions of migrant workers, mostly from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, live in Russia, which is dependent on their labor because of a rapidly declining population and a dwindling domestic work force. But violent attacks against ethnic minorities in Russia are common and have become more severe, analysts said.

This year, 85 people have been reported killed and 367 injured in attacks by nationalists, Ms. Kozhevnikova said. She said the numbers were probably far higher because many attacks were unrecorded or were reported months later. Most of the victims have been dark-skinned men from Central Asia or the Caucasus, but tourists and foreign students have also been attacked.

A foreign student who was attacked on Dec. 5, Stanley Robinson, a young African-American from Providence, R.I., on a study-abroad program to Volgograd in southern Russia, remained in critical condition after being stabbed three times on his way back from a gym, a relative said. The police are investigating whether the attack on Mr. Robinson was a hate crime.

Human rights groups have frequently criticized Russian officials for appearing to sympathize with violent nationalists and for not adequately addressing racist attacks. State-run Russian television has largely ignored the killing of the Tajik worker, though newspapers, which are typically more independent of the government, have covered it heavily.

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A **police** crackdown this year on nationalist and neo-fascist groups reduced the number of attacks in **Moscow** this summer, Ms. Kozhevnikova said.

Yet violence in **Moscow** has begun to rise again in recent months, particularly after the rape and **killing** of a 15-year-old ethnic Russian girl two months ago. A city maintenance **worker** from Uzbekistan was charged with the crime, setting off protests and revenge attacks by ultranationalist groups.

The episode is reminiscent of another beheading videotaped and disseminated on the Internet more than a year ago, in which a masked person decapitates a bound, dark-skinned man. Moments later, another man is shot in the head. The video ends with two people in masks giving Nazi salutes in front of a red banner emblazoned with a swastika. The killers have not been identified.

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