

Medvedev Warns on Olympics

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President Dmitry Medvedev pointed a finger at Georgia on Friday as he spoke about security threats to the Russian 2014 Winter Olympics, in remarks likely to anger the nation with which it fought a brief war in 2008.

"Forces that would impede holding the Olympics must be identified and brought to justice, if we are talking about citizens of our country," Medvedev told his Security Council at a meeting in the games venue Sochi, up the Black Sea coast from Georgia.

"You all understand that there are also certain problems connected to our neighbor, Georgia."

Threats from inside and outside Russia "demand heightened attention from the Foreign Ministry, law enforcement bodies and security structures," he said in televised comments at the meeting, after a run down a mountain ski slope.

Medvedev appeared to be referring to a brewing row between Russia and Georgia over the Muslim Circassian people, who are originally from the northwest Caucasus and now scattered across the globe.

Members of the Circassian diaspora are demanding the Olympics be canceled or moved unless Russia apologizes for what they say was genocide against their ancestors in the area where the winter games will be held.

In 2014 it will have been 150 years since a tsarist military campaign wiped out 300,000 Circassians in and around Sochi.

Although recorded by Russian imperial historians in 1864, no nation has recognized the deaths as genocide. Georgia has said it is considering doing so after it was asked by Circassian lobby groups based in the United States, Turkey and Jordan.

The closest the Russian government has come to apologizing for the Circassian bloodshed was in 1994, when President Boris Yeltsin said resistance to tsarist violence was legitimate.

Moscow has accused Georgia of collaborating with al-Qaida and aiding Islamist militants in terrorist activities on Russian soil, charges Christian-majority Georgia has denied.

The Kremlin is struggling to contain an Islamist insurgency in mainly Muslim provinces in Russia's North Caucasus, some of which border Georgia, a decade after federal troops drove separatists from power in Chechnya in the second of two wars.

The sprawling municipality of Sochi borders Abkhazia, a Russian-backed separatist region of Georgia that Moscow recognized as an independent nation after the 2008 war.

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