

Poet Fears Jail Over Manezh Riot Rhyme

By [Alexandra Odynova](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

A Moscow poet said he faced ethnic hatred charges after being summoned to police headquarters Tuesday "for a chat" about a poem describing December rioting near the Kremlin.

Vsevolod Yemelin, a well-known modern poet in the Russian blogosphere, could be fined 500,000 rubles (\$17,400) and jailed for five years if charged and convicted of inciting ethnic hatred with "Poetic Feuilleton," a poem [published](#) on his LiveJournal blog that critics say supports ultranationalists.

The poem's closing lines read: "Meanwhile the Caucasus natives knife Russians at all crossroads/And shoot them dead with a gun/The more they shoot, the louder they shout, "Glory to Putin!"

Yemelin said police were looking into a complaint from a resident from the Kabardino-Balkaria republic.

"The issue is a Kabardino-Balkaria resident who didn't like the content of my poem has requested that a criminal case be opened on charges of inciting ethnic hatred," Yemelin said, according to RIA-Novosti.

Yemelin has written two poems about the rioting of some 5,000 nationalists on Manezh Square in December. The protesters were demanding justice after an ethnic Russian football fan was killed during a clash with North Caucasus natives earlier that month. The other poem, titled "Once Again About Tenderness," was published in the Perm-based Sol magazine.

Yemelin said he did not receive official, written summons but an informal invitation by telephone. Even though the law doesn't oblige people to obey informal phone calls from the police, Yemelin said he decided to go anyway. "Farewell, comrades," he wrote on his [blog](#) late Monday.

After the police interview Tuesday, he said he had been informed that a linguistic expert had reviewed his poem at the police's request and determined that it contained some "incorrect" references. A decision on whether to open a criminal case now rests in prosecutors' hands, he said.

Yemelin, who in one of his few published interviews says his full-time job is a church carpenter, regularly writes poetry on current affairs, but this is the first time he has attracted the interest of the police.

Separately, in another move against critical cultural figures, investigators have wrapped up charges against Novosibirsk artist Artyom Loskutov, who is accused of insulting police officers with his artwork, Interfax reported Tuesday, citing the artist.

It is the second case against Loskutov. In 2009, he was convicted of illegal drug possession and ordered to pay a fine. He and his supporters said the charges were punishment for his co-organization of an annual anti-government flash mob called Monstratsia, which could be roughly translated as "Monsterization."

In the latest case, Loskutov is under fire for an online article and caricature about the police and is accused of using "insulting expressions" when speaking of specific Novosibirsk police officers in public.

If tried and convicted, he faces a fine of up to 40,000 rubles or correctional labor.

Loskutov, who is in Novosibirsk under a written pledge not leave the city, has denied wrongdoing.

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