

Libel Case Opened Against Church Critic

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A critic of retail operations at Christ the Savior Cathedral is now a suspect in a criminal libel case opened by the head of the cathedral's charity foundation, the Society for Consumer Rights Protection said Tuesday.

The case against Mikhail Anshakov, head of the consumer rights group, was initiated by Vasily Poddevalin, head of the foundation.

After being decriminalized during Dmitry Medvedev's presidency, libel again became a criminal offense in July and is punishable by a fine of up to 1 million rubles (\$33,000). The Anshakov investigation is the first criminal libel case since the penalty was reinstated.

Investigators said earlier that Anshakov had slandered the Christ the Savior Foundation and Poddevalin in an interview with Novaya Gazeta in September.

Anshakov stated in the interview that the cathedral, the site of the high-profile Pussy Riot performance in February, leases out office space and runs a car wash and jewelry stores.

In December, Anshakov was attacked. The attackers beat him up in broad daylight. He wrote on his blog that he believed that Poddevalin was behind the attack.

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