

Former Olympics Official Says He Was Poisoned

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Akhmed Bilalov, the former vice president of Russia's Olympic Committee, has said that he is being treated in Germany for mercury poisoning and intends to appeal to law enforcement authorities upon his return to Russia.

Bilalov told Interfax on Saturday that he began to feel sick last fall, and a trip to the doctor revealed that he had elevated levels of mercury in his system.

"I definitely don't want to accuse anyone of anything or speculate about how mercury wound up in my Moscow office. I have no guesses yet," he said.

"The worst part is, as is already known, I was in contact with the source of the infection for a long time," Bilalov said, adding that his co-workers are being checked for mercury poisoning as well.

Bilalov, a former chairman of the North Caucasus Resorts' board of directors, has been at the center of several scandals recently.

He was publicly scolded and sacked by President Vladimir Putin over delays and cost overruns at the Krasnaya Polyana ski resort in Sochi in February.

He is also accused by the Prosecutor General's Office of spending money allocated to the state corporation North Caucasus Resorts on lavish trips to London and across Russia.

A criminal case was opened against him in early April on charges of abuse of office, which carry a maximum punishment of four years in prison.

Last week, the Interior Ministry announced a preliminary check into information that Bilalov was involved in a tax evasion scheme.

Despite earlier speculation that Bilalov left Russia to avoid facing the charges, however, he said he is definitely returning and going straight to police over his mercury poisoning.

According to RIA–Novosti, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry said police would handle Bilalov's complaint in accordance with the established procedure, adding that investigators were still waiting for testimony from Bilalov for a criminal case in which he is currently a witness.

Mercury poisoning can be fatal depending on the dose and duration of exposure.

In 2010, German prosecutors opened an inquiry after two Russian journalists were found to have elevated levels of mercury and accused the Federal Security Service of trying to poison them, according to The Telegraph.

In another case that got attention in the West, in 2008, a lawyer for the family of prominent journalist Anna Politkovskaya said she found mercury in her car.

She told The Associated Press at the time that it had been done to scare her or keep her away from the trial over Politkovskaya's murder.

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