

Investigators Probe 'Extremist' Article's Call For Attacks on Chechens

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Investigators in Russia's central Urals region have opened a criminal case after a newspaper article called on people in a provincial town to attack ethnic Chechen residents, following a high-profile murder there.

The case was opened over "public calls for extremist activity with the use of mass media" in an article published earlier this month in the regional paper Zvezda.

The July 19 opinion piece by Zvezda's Roman Yushkov allegedly called for radical measures against internal migrants from the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, Perm Region prosecutors said Monday.

Yushkov's article included appeals for arson attacks on "Chechen houses" in the town of Pugachyov, investigators said. The town was in a state of high tension following the death of former paratrooper who was allegedly fatally stabbed by a 16-year-old ethnic Chechen

on July 7, according to the regional prosecutor's office.

The incident prompted hundreds of angry locals to march on a part of the town inhabited by ethnic Chechens, forcing police to intervene. The town's governor spoke to residents in a bid to defuse the crisis, but was forced to stop after a bottle was thrown at him from a jeering crowd, Vzglyad-info reported.

The offense of publicly appealing for extremist activity using mass media carries a maximum sentence of up to five years in jail according to Russian law. The government said in May that it was considering introducing tougher penalties against appeals for extremism including statements containing hatred, or causing damage to human dignity with sexual, racial, national, linguistic or religious characteristics.

President Vladimir Putin warned last year against the threat of rising nationalism and called for the creation of a new state agency to promote interethnic harmony, in an article on his website.

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