

Police Vow Renewed Fight After Attack

By [Natalya Krainova](#)

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Moscow police on Tuesday conducted a second day of inspections at the city's open-air markets as the fall-out of Saturday's brutal attack on a policeman continued with over 1,000 detentions and Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev demanding that ethnic crime be eradicated.

Police have detained a Dagestani native suspected of severely beating the policeman at Moscow's Matveyevsky Market on Saturday. The attack came in response to the policeman's attempt to detain another Dagestani native suspected of raping a 15-year-old girl.

Magomed Rasulov, 33, was taken off the train late Monday as he tried to flee the city, a police source told Interfax.

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The attack involved some two dozen workers at the market in the city's north who tried but failed to prevent armed police officers in plain clothes from detaining an allegedly mentally disabled 18-year-old Dagestani native, Magomed Magomedov.

Several women and Rasulov attacked police officer Anton Kudryashov, leaving Kudryashov hospitalized in intensive care and in need of brain surgery, which he was set to undergo on Tuesday.

The incident was recorded by a witness and posted on YouTube.

Rape suspect Magomedov initially denied the rape charges, but later admitted guilt to investigators, they said. Raping a minor is punishable by up to 15 years in prison.

His uncle Rasulov and his aunt Khalimat Rasulova were arrested by a court on Tuesday and charged with attempted murder of a policeman, the Investigative Committee said. They face life in prison if convicted.

Despite the detentions, however, Saturday's incident has continued to have a domino effect. Moscow police chief Anatoly Yakunin ordered inspections of all Moscow markets, which started on Monday and resulted in hundreds of detentions that day. On Tuesday, Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev told Yakunin to inspect other facilities as well.

"The minister ordered us to carry out a set of measures to fight criminal elements in Moscow in general, and to fight organized and ethnic crimes in particular and stop activities of professional thieves," an Interior Ministry spokesperson told Interfax, adding that inspections will continue for a "long period of time."

By late Tuesday, over 1,000 people had been detained and fingerprinted, according to RIA Novosti. Checks were done at three different markets in the city's west, including Matveyevsky Market, a city police source told RIA Novosti.

Yakunin on Tuesday vowed to "reinforce the fight against crime at all the city's markets, and the fight against ethnic crime in general," Interfax reported.

Late Monday, Yakunin fired the head of the Ochakovo-Matveyevskoye police precinct over Saturday's incident and vowed to fire other district police heads in the next few months if they didn't "put things in order at the city's markets," Yakunin said, Interfax reported.

Yakunin called Saturday's attack on the policeman "a challenge" to all policemen, which police had "treated appropriately," RIA Novosti reported.

The injured police officer and his colleagues who took part in Saturday's detention will be given awards, Yakunin said.

Despite Yakunin's praise for police action, however, some thought the police response was lacking.

Journalist Nikolai Svanidze, who heads the Public Chamber's commission for interethnic relations, thought the police reaction was "hesitant" on Saturday. That hesitation could be a sign that market workers regularly bribed police in order to avoid legal problems, Svanidze said by telephone.

Alexei Malashenko, a North Caucasus expert with the Carnegie Moscow Center, echoed that sentiment while speaking to The Moscow Times.

Svanidze also slammed police for carrying out "purges based on considerations of ethnicity" and wondered why police hadn't carried out similar inspections prior to Saturday's incident.

Alexander Verkhovsky, head of the Sova Center, which monitors xenophobia, explained that the market workers' resistance to police on Saturday may have stemmed from the "extremely low authority" of Dagestani police among Dagestani natives.

The market workers, who are presumed to be mostly Dagestani natives, simply projected that same attitude onto Moscow police, he said.

Pavel Salin, director of the Center for Political Studies at the Financial University of the Russian Government, attributed the market workers' reaction to a different attitude, however.

Salin said by telephone that North Caucasus natives had "gotten used to feeling that they were privileged" due to the large subsidies given to their republics from the federal budget.

Contact the author at n.krainova@imedia.ru

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