

Conditions at Seized Georgian Restaurant Go From Bad to Worse

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Khachapuri restaurant on Paveletskaya, which was forcibly seized on Friday morning by a group of masked men, is now cordoned off and guarded by a private security force, who have reportedly begun pouring sewage on the street.

The restaurant's Facebook page is now the only source of updates.

The man who ordered the raid is Vitaly Artyukhov, a former natural resources minister, according to the restaurant's management.

Khachapuri signed a seven-year lease with Avtokombinat-4, a company owned by Artyukhov, in May 2012.

The cafe substantially renovated the premises in the months that followed. Immediately prior to their opening in December, Artyukhov contacted them demanding a higher rent, they said.

The cafe opened without giving in to Artyukhov's demands, but in the months that followed Avtokombinat-4 made its discontent known by repeatedly shutting off the water and electricity and blocking the entrances to the cafe, finally culminating in the recent take-over.

Police responded to the incident on the morning of the attack but refused to speak with management, although they did speak with the director of Avtokombinat-4, who was present during the seizure, the statement said.

Representatives of the local Department of Internal Affairs came later in the day, interviewed management, sealed off the property, and recorded the property loss sustained during the attack, which included a video server and a safe containing 4 million rubles (\$121,000).

The incident has prompted comparisons to the Moscow of the turbulent '90s, when such raids were frighteningly common, and many have commented on the vulnerability of tenants under Russian property law.

But the restaurant's regulars had at least one cause for celebration on Monday: the cafe's beloved mascot, Tolik the sheep, who had been held hostage during the raid, was released.

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