

Environmental Protesters Arrested on Extortion Charges

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Police have detained two people formerly linked to an environmental protest movement for alleged extortion in a case activists say is a crude attempt to discredit their campaign.

Mikhail Bezmensky and Igor Zhitenyov stand accused of attempting to extort 15 million rubles (\$450,000) from the Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company, or UMMC, in exchange for ending the protests, police said Friday.

Plans by UMMC to explore nickel and copper deposits by the Koper River in the agricultural-intensive Voronezh region in southern Russia has been greeted by vocal resistance from local residents and Cossack groups.

The standoff has been ongoing since mid-2012 and has resulted in violent clashes between protesters and company guards. UMMC estimates that 60 million rubles (\$1.8 million) worth of equipment was destroyed in attack by opponents of the project.

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