

Migrant Workers Plan Rally to Protest 'Slave-Like' Conditions in Moscow, Report Says

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Migrant workers in Moscow are planning to gather thousands of people for a rally to demand an end to "slavery."

Migrant laborers in Moscow are planning to rally this fall to demand an end to "slavery" — miserable working conditions and a backlog of unpaid wages that organizers say foreign workers are facing at the capital's markets — a news report said Wednesday.

Karomat Sharipov, the head of Russia's Tajik Labor Migrants association, said the group would file a petition with Moscow's City Hall to authorize the protest planned for October, the *Izvestia* newspaper reported.

"According to our information, at 12 of Moscow's markets, thousands of Tajiks are effectively kept in slavery," Sharipov was quoted as saying. "They are not paid their wages, their

documents are taken away, they are kept locked up on the properties of Moscow's markets."

Supervisors at some of Moscow's sprawling market complexes charge their foreign laborers 5,000 rubles (\$138) each for a bunk bed on its grounds, even if the men have dwellings outside the compound. Other workers are barred from venturing outside of the market, Sharipov was quoted as saying by Izvestia.

Administrators at the Moskva, Mezhdunarodny and Sadovod markets, which Sharipov specifically singled out for criticism, have said migration service inspectors hold checks at their compounds several times a month, making it impossible to conceal the presence of thousands of illegal foreign workers.

An unidentified advertizing employee at Sadovod, where hundreds of unauthorized workers were rounded up last year after police raids, said his office was "hearing for the first time" that unregistered migrant workers were being held on the market's territory, Izvestia reported.

A spokesperson for Mezhdunarodny said the market employed about a dozen foreign laborers and that all of them had work permits, the report said.

Russian police and migration service officials have stepped up their checks of Moscow's markets in the wake of ethnically charged riots in the Biryulyovo district last fall that were sparked by the killing of a local Russian man by an Azeri national.

A Moscow court this summer found the suspect, Orkhan Zeinalov guilty of murder and sentenced him to 17 years in prison.

See also:

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