

Former Prison Head Cleared of Extorting Items From Inmates' Relatives

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A court in the far-eastern region of Kamchatka on Wednesday acquitted the former head of a penal colony accused of having abused his powers by demanding material items from inmates' relatives in exchange for the prisoners' release.

The man, who was not identified in the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky City Court's statement, allegedly demanded 200 winter hats from an inmate's mother in exchange for her son's release on probation, news website Lenta.ru reported in April 2013, when the Investigative Committee first announced that it was looking into the incident.

The woman bought the hats and took them to the prison administration, after which the inmate was freed on probation, the report said.

The prison director was also accused of demanding a video surveillance system from an inmate's relatives in exchange for keeping the inmate at that particular penal colony in May 2011, the court statement said.

The next year, he allegedly demanded a television and furniture from an inmate's father after the inmate supposedly violated prison rules.

Despite the string of investigators' accusations, the court ruled that the findings were "presumptive" and that there was no evidence of a crime.

The court said the man was guilty only of "violating the procedure for receiving and processing charitable aid," a violation for which he could face disciplinary action.

The man, who had faced more than seven years in prison on the charges, now has the right to compensation for material and moral damages incurred by the criminal prosecution, the court said.

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