

Chechen Police Run Mass Passport Checks in Fear of Attack on Holidays

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Chechen Interior Ministry servicemen stand guard near a market building damaged during fighting between unknown gunmen and police, in the Chechen capital Grozny, on Dec. 4, 2014.

Police in Chechnya have ramped up security measures with extensive passport checks ahead of the New Year's holidays as residents fear a repeat of the Dec. 4 attack in the region's capital that claimed dozens of lives.

Residents of the Staropromyslovsky district of Grozny, the Chechen capital, told the Caucasian Knot news portal that the checks began with the arrival of dozens of police cars on Wednesday evening.

"The cars were full of police officers, most of them in plain clothes, but all of them armed. They walked along the street, stopping in all the courtyards. We haven't had checks like that in a very long time," one resident, who requested anonymity, was cited as saying.

"They had a list with addresses and names. They weren't interested in the locals, they were asking whether any strangers had arrived," another resident told the news portal.

A representative for the Chechen branch of the Interior Ministry said the checks were being conducted as a preventative measure ahead of the holidays and would continue through Jan. 11, Caucasian Knot reported.

With the Dec. 4 attack still fresh in the minds of residents, many fear the republic's underground Islamic insurgency could strike again over the holidays.

"Everyone just keeps saying lately that the militants might come to Grozny again for New Year's," a Grozny resident identified only as Seda told the news portal. "A lot of my acquaintances have decided not to go out on New Year's night," he added.

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