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Russian Federation: Cases of violence against women in the family

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Amnesty International is campaigning to prevent violence against women in the family in order to raise public awareness of this issue in the Russian Federation and to urge the government to take concrete steps to deal with it. Information received by Amnesty International has received from victims of such abuses indicates that the police often fail to register such cases properly, to conduct thorough investigations, and that the criminal justice system often denies women their right to justice. The cases listed below illustrate the suffering of the victims and deficiencies in the police and criminal justice system.

The case of Katya V.

"Katya V". (pseudonym) got married to her husband, "Evgenii" (pseudonym), in 1982. Katya V. describes her husband as a person with a "difficult character" – even when he is sober; he is very jealous, yells at her, insults her, threatens to kill her, beats her, and throws her out of the house:

"My husband drinks mainly at night. Not only that: he turns on the light, TV, stereo everywhere and starts to "educate" me, the kids and even the cat. He swears at everyone, pulls me out of my bed and drags me all around the flat – ending up with forcing me to have sex with him. If I try to resist, he beats me, throws me out of the house, insults me, strangles me, ties me up, tears my clothes and my hair, throws me off the balcony –by holding my legs with the head down while shouting that I have to obey him."

Excerpt from Katya V's statement to the court in West Siberia

It was reported to Amnesty International that:

While Evgenii was working with the police as a guard, Katya V. turned to his employers for assistance several times. They came to their house and spoke to him, but it was all useless – his promises to change his behaviour lasted at best for a month and then the abuse started all over again and got worse. Sometimes the employers would pick Evgenii up and bring him to the police department, where they would go to the sauna together, drink and rest. After that Evgenii would come back home only more aggressive and violent.

On one occasion, Evgenii after a heavy drinking session attacked a woman threatening her with a pocket knife. The woman reported the attack but the prosecutor closed the case for lack of evidence. Evgenii was eventually forced to leave his job with the police, but it coincided with the end of his contract.

After many years of violence and lack of serious attention from the police, Katya's mother went to the local Crisis Centre to ask for assistance so that her daughter could get a divorce. Katya herself was not only petrified of her abuser but could also barely walk at that time, since Evgenii had thrown a sewing machine at her, breaking her leg. Katya wanted her husband to get prosecuted. However, the court returned the case, claiming that she had not filled in the necessary documents correctly. This decision made her give up the idea of having her husband prosecuted. Instead she got a divorce and a share of their property and is now living separately from her husband.

The case of Tatiana G. (32)

"At 11:30 pm on 3 October 2002 my husband "Sergei" (pseudonym) arrived home with his friend "Andrei" (pseudonym). My daughter was already asleep, whereas it took me a long time to fall asleep this night, since I heard Sergei and Andrei in the kitchen, trying to call somewhere. A while later a taxi drove up to our house, and Sergei and Andrei went out, signed something and paid someone money. Three people entered the house: Sergei, Andrei and a girl. I went out in the corridor and asked the girl who she was. She replied that she had been called up and had come to "serve" the two men. I wished her good luck. She said that she would be ready to leave and called her firm. After she had left, Sergei entered my room, pulled me out of bed and dragged me into the kitchen. There he bent my arms, pushed me to the floor and started beating my head against the floor. He said that he is the "czar and ruler" and that I must do whatever he tells me to do. He forced me to repeat his words, and continued to bend my arms. I asked him: 'Do you want to kill me?' He answered: 'I will bring you to such a state that you will kill yourself. You need to be beaten and beaten. You are just a piece of meat. If I kill you I won't get punished.'"
Excerpts from "Tatiana G.'s" (pseudonym) statement to the court in West Siberia

It was reported to Amnesty International that:

Sergei's friend, Andrei, did little to intervene while Sergei was beating Tatiana. Tatiana says: "Andrei did not defend me. He was there until the end and I would never have thought that someone working as a police officer could act in such a mean way in such a situation."

On 8 October 2002 Tatiana's health deteriorated as a result of her husband's abuse and she went to the police to report the case. The police sent her for forensic examination. When she later went to the hospital, however, she was told that they did not have room for her. She was advised to stay in bed at home and visit a specialist, which she did the following day. Her medical condition worsened and she was taken to hospital on 11 October.

The police officer who had sent Tatiana to get a forensic examination failed to wait for the results and filed the evidence to the court without them. Moreover, the officer reportedly fabricated Tatiana's signature on a document, which stated that she refused to do a forensic examination. As a result of this the judge did not know that she was hospitalized. When Tatiana returned from hospital, she found a notification that the trial had started already while she was in hospital, although the parties to a trial are supposed to be notified in person. In court the judge returned Tatiana's complaint because the form had been filled incorrectly. Ten days later, while Tatiana was still in the hospital the judge decided to close Tatiana's case because the deadline for producing a corrected complaint had run out.

After being released from hospital and with the assistance of a local crisis centre, Tatiana wrote to the court explaining why she had failed to appear in court; she also complained to the local police department about the police officer's behaviour. At the time of writing, Tatiana is waiting for the case to come before the court for the second time. She still has not received the results of the forensic examination.

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