

Khursheda Sultanova

Russian Federation

Khursheda Sultanova – a nine-year-old girl of Tajik ethnicity – lived with her family in St Petersburg when she was brutally murdered in a reported racist attack in February 2004. The murder sent shock-waves through the town and other parts of the Russian Federation, yet to date no-one has been charged with the murder and despite clear signs of racial motivation, the police have not so far classified the attack as a race hate crime.

At around 21.00 on 9 February 2004, Khursheda Sultanova was returning to her home in St Petersburg with her father Yusuf Sultanov and her 11-year-old cousin Alabir Sultanov. As the Sultanov family reached the courtyard by their home they were set upon by a gang of youths carrying knuckledusters, chains, sticks and knives. During the violent assault that ensued, the attackers are reported to have shouted racist slogans at the victims, such as "Russia for Russians". Khursheda Sultanova died at the scene of the attack from excessive blood loss – according to police reports she had been stabbed 11 times in the chest, stomach and arms. Yusuf Sultanov sustained head injuries during the violent attack but reportedly refused hospitalization. Alabir Sultanov – who later managed to hide under a nearby parked car to avoid further injury – also sustained head injuries and received hospital treatment.

According to reports, several youths were detained by police soon after the attack and then released without charge. A criminal investigation into the murder has been opened, although the alleged racial intent of the attack has so far not been acknowledged by the authorities.

The murder of Khursheda Sultanova drew an unprecedented response from senior government and other officials; such as Governor of St Petersburg, Valentina Matvienko and the Interior Minister, Rashid Nurgaliev, who were outspoken in their condemnation of the murder and calls for tolerance.

Discrimination on grounds of race is a reality for many members of ethnic or national minority groups in the Russian Federation. Victims whose cases have come to the attention of Amnesty International are predominantly students, asylum-seekers and refugees from Africa, but also include citizens of the Russian Federation (including ethnic Chechens and Jews), as well as people from the south Caucasus, from South, Southeast and Central Asia, from the Middle East and from Latin America.

The Russian Federation is a state party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention obliges the authorities to take active measures to prohibit and eliminate discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin and to guarantee to everyone equality before the law.

TAKE ACTION NOW!

Please send appeals immediately:

- welcoming the fact that an investigation is being conducted into the murder of Khursheda Sultanova and enquiring as to whether the attack on Yusuf and Alabir Sultanov will also be looked into as part of this investigation;

- urging the authorities to ensure that the investigation into the attack and murder are conducted in a thorough and impartial manner;
- calling for allegations that the attack and murder were racially-motivated to be fully investigated and duly reflected in any charges brought against suspects;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that anyone reasonably suspected as being responsible for the attack is brought to justice in the course of a fair trial in line with international standards;
- urging the Russian authorities "to strengthen its efforts to prevent racist violence and to protect members of ethnic minorities and foreigners..." as recommended by the (UN) Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in March 2003.

Send appeals to:

Procurator of St Petersburg

Nikolai Vinnichenko

Procuracy of St Petersburg

Ul. Pochtamtskaia 2/9

190000 St Petersburg

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 812 312 15 95

Salutation: Dear Procurator

Head of St Petersburg and Leninskii Region Department of Internal Affairs

Mikhail Vanichkin

Suvorovskii pr, 50/52

191015 St. Petersburg

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 812 274 9992/ +7 812 102 2206

Email: mg_police@gov.spb.ru

Salutation: Dear Chief of Police

Copies to:

Governor of St Petersburg

Valentina Matvienko

Smolny pom. 378

Sentralnyi Raion

191060 St. Petersburg

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 812 276 18 27

Salutation: Dear Governor

Procurator General of the Russian Federation

Vladimir Ustinov

Ul. Bolshaia Dimitrovka, 15a

103793 Moscow
Russian Federation

Fax: +7 095 292 88 48

Salutation: Dear Procurator General

Minister of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation

Rashid Nurgaliev

Ul. Zhitnaia, 16

117049 Moscow

Russian Federation

Fax: +7 095 237 49 25/+7 095 230 25 80

Salutation: Dear Minister