

## **Russian Federation: Indifference to racism must be addressed**

*A vigorous response from the Russian authorities to racism is needed to stem the growing tide of attacks against ethnic minorities, Amnesty International said today.*

*In the past, racist attacks on ethnic and racial minorities across Russia have increased markedly as the anniversary of Adolf Hitler's birth on 20 April approaches. The victims of racist attacks are often persons from Africa, Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, including ethnic Chechens, and refugees and asylum-seekers.*

*"Fear of racist attacks among Russia's minority population is not confined to fear of 'skinheads'; they have almost as much to fear from officials," the organisation stated.*

*Police and other law enforcement officials routinely subject racial and ethnic minorities to harassment and intimidation and often respond with indifference to racist attacks. Victims of racist attacks frequently complain that law enforcement officials are reluctant to register attacks as racist or fail to understand the serious implications of racially-motivated violence. Police often advise the victims to report the attack as 'hooliganism'.*

*"Until the authorities address racist attitudes within law enforcement agencies, they will continue to be part of the problem, rather than the solution," Amnesty International stated.*

*When Adefers Dessu, an Ethiopian refugee, and his wife Sarah were beaten by 20-year-olds armed with chains in Moscow in February 2001, the medical report stated that their injuries were the result of a*

“fall”, while the attackers were registered by the police officer on duty as being minors. Similarly, in October 2001 when a crowd of 300 youths brandishing iron bars attacked a Moscow market staffed by ethnic minorities and left an Armenian, an Indian and a Tajik dead, initial police statements referred to the perpetrators as ‘football hooligans’. In the Siberian city of Tiumen, a series of seven attacks on a synagogue last year were termed ‘young people’s hooliganism’. Authorities have done nothing in response to racist statements by public figures in Russia’s regions and anti-Semitic publications are openly on sale even in the capital, Moscow.

Members of racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately targeted for document checks on the street that commonly lead to extortion and can result in detention, torture and ill-treatment. In two well publicised cases last year, members of the Moscow city and Moscow district organised crime force (RUBOP) were implicated in the torture, ill-treatment, extortion and fabrication of evidence against Tajik migrant workers. Their actions were accompanied by racist insults and stereotyping of Tajiks as Islamic fundamentalist fighters and drug dealers. Authorities blocked attempts by the victims formally to complain.

Federal authorities allow city and regional authorities to ignore federal laws governing freedom of movement that discriminate against ethnic and racial minorities. Krasnodar authorities refuse to grant residence permits to some 13,000 Meskhetian Turks resident in Krasnodar Territory, rendering them “stateless” and unable legally to work or to own land. On 1 April, Krasnodar authorities announced the setting up of deportation centres, staffed by paramilitary units, to deport these ‘illegal migrants’.

“Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently condemned racist attacks by ‘skinheads’ in Moscow’. If he is serious about condemning

*racism, he must now condemn and vigorously address manifestations of racism in the day to day actions and policies of the police and other authorities," stated Amnesty International.*

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