

Amnesty International

Russian Federation – Protect students from violent racist attacks

Appeal Case

10 May 2006

Lamsar Samba Sell, a student from Senegal, was shot dead in the early morning of 7 April 2006 in St Petersburg. A gunman opened fire on a group of foreign students as they left a weekly gathering of inter-cultural friendship between Russians and foreigners. Lamsar Samba Sell was reported to have been shot in the back. An air rifle was found abandoned nearby emblazoned with a swastika, although it was not thought to be the weapon used to murder the student. A criminal investigation was immediately opened under Article 105 part 2 (murder motivated by racial hatred) and an arrest warrant for a suspect was issued on 11 April. Lamsar Samba Sell had taken part in anti-racism initiatives such as giving lessons in secondary schools on African culture and tolerance.

Twenty-year-old Vu Anh Tuan, a Vietnamese student at the St Petersburg Polytechnic University, was stabbed to death on 13 October 2004 as he was walking to a metro station in the city. His attackers were reportedly a group of about 18 youths with shaved heads, wearing black boots and black clothes. A criminal case was opened under Article 105 part 2 of the Criminal Code (murder carried out by a group). Students in St Petersburg organized demonstrations and meetings to protest against the authorities' failure adequately to address the wave of racist violence in the city. Preliminary court proceedings in the murder of Vu Anh Tuan started on 1 February 2006 in St Petersburg. Fourteen of the defendants were charged with the murder of Vu Anh Tuan. The defendants were also charged with another six separate racist attacks in which four foreigners and two Russian citizens had been injured. However the proceedings were suspended on 28 March due to difficulties in appointing 18 members of the jury – while 64 potential candidates had been selected, the vast majority of them declined to participate, citing various reasons.

A group of people beat and stabbed Peruvian student Enrique Arturo Angelis Urtado to death on 9 October 2005 in the city of Voronezh. Two other foreign students, Spanish and Peruvian, were badly injured during the attack. On 9 March 2006 the court hearing began for 13 defendants from Voronezh, aged between 14 and 19. The prosecution has brought charges which include racial hatred as a motivation against all alleged participants in the attack.

These are just some of the foreign students who have become victims of violent racist attacks in the Russian Federation. Many more students from Africa, Asia or Latin America have been killed or injured in Russia in what seem to have been racially motivated attacks. The authorities in St. Petersburg and Voronezh, where these three killings happened, acknowledged that racial hatred may have been the motivation for the attacks. However, Amnesty International is concerned that the Russian authorities in the face of the scale of the problem have taken too little adequate action to protect foreign students and members of ethnic minorities from racist violence and to bring to justice those who are guilty of such violent racist attacks.

Please write letters to the Russian authorities,

- expressing concern about the many reports of allegedly racially motivated killings of foreign students in the Russian Federation;
- welcoming statements by Russian law enforcement officials that acknowledge the problem of racism and intolerance in the Russian Federation;
- welcoming efforts by law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators in these three murders but expressing concern that many more attacks may go unreported as many foreigners and members of ethnic minorities who become

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victims of a crime lack confidence in the justice system and in law enforcement officials to help them;

- calling on the authorities to ensure that crimes which are reasonably believed to be racially motivated are classified, effectively and thoroughly investigated and prosecuted as such;
- urging the authorities to address deficiencies in the investigation and prosecution of racist attacks, including through the development of clear guidelines and training for police, procurators and judges who deal with such cases.

Please send your letters to:

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Please send copies as well to the Russian embassy in your country.