



MPC Social Services

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Task Force on Racial Violence and Harassment Annual Report 2013

Introduction

Since 2001, the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy's Task Force on Racial Violence and Harassment has interviewed people of color about racially-motivated attacks and harassment they have experienced in Russia, while seeking to support and assist victims and potential victims.

In its collection of reports, the Task Force works mainly with the African community but documents all cases of physical attacks or harassment reported to it and determines their motive on a case by case basis. The Task Force defines *attack* as a physical assault regardless of whether or not it causes serious lasting injury to the victim. Racially-motivated *harassment* takes many forms, from inappropriate staring to verbal assault and intimidation.

The Task Force gathers this information in order to understand and communicate the broader picture of violence and harassment against people of color in Russia. However, this report focuses primarily on individuals' stories, and does not attempt a statistical overview of race-motivated violence in Moscow: our current statistics represent a small sample size, being limited to those cases brought to us and authorized for use in this report, which we believe to be only a small proportion of total incidents. Harassment is reported even less frequently than physical attacks.

In 2013 we became particularly aware of the limits of self-led reporting, since we worked with a number of victims who chose not to report or to authorize use of their stories in this report. In an attempt to address this, in the second half of 2013 the Task Force introduced some new information gathering techniques. We ran a survey over the course of two months on the experiences of migrants, particularly Africans, in Moscow. This allowed us to get a much better idea of the level at which harassment is experienced by those we work with, and therefore replaced our self-report forms for incidents of harassment. The survey also allowed us to find out about attacks which had not yet been reported, and encourage individuals to report the incident formally. In this annual report, we begin with a summary of our survey results, before describing the particular violent incidents brought to our attention throughout 2013.

Please note that all names are changed in the report for the safety of the victims, but all other information including country of origin, age, etc. are accurate.

Executive Summary

Through a survey conducted among 27 migrants and refugees, **100% of respondents reported experiencing harassment**. In addition, **58% had been victims of physical attacks**.

During 2013, the Task Force recorded **13 physical attacks**:

- 4 racially-motivated physical attacks (including one from 2012, only reported this year)
- 2 suspected racially-motivated physical attacks
- 7 physical attacks of unidentified motivation or theft

NB The number of attacks is counted by incident, not by the number of people attacked in the incident.

The Task Force also recorded three cases of institutional harassment, when a group of African migrants were arrested and detained after a police raid on their apartment.

Survey Results

In a survey conducted in October and November 2013, the Task force gathered information from 27 migrants and refugees on their experiences of living in Moscow. Of those surveyed, 88.5% were male and 11.5% were female (N.B. This reflects the ratio of users of our drop-in center, but we acknowledge that it does not reflect the distribution of migrants in Moscow). The countries of origin of the respondents were as follows:

- DRC – 31%
- Cameroon – 15%
- Ivory Coast – 23%
- Ghana – 3.5%
- Togo – 3.5%
- Guinea – 3.5%
- Philippines – 3.5%
- Burkina Faso – 3.5%
- Unstated – 15%

Harassment

100% of those who responded surveyed had personally experienced what they describe as racially motivated harassment in Russia. 12.5% say they experience harassment on a daily basis; a further 12.5%, several times a week; 12.5% on a weekly basis; and an additional 25%, several times a month. This totals 62.5% who experience race-based harassment several times a month or more.

Race-based violence

65.4% of those surveyed have personally experienced what they believe to be racially motivated violence in Russia. 94.1% of those surveyed had not reported the incident(s) at the time of the interview (although some of these incidents are captured in the summaries below). In addition, 80.8% know someone who has personally experienced race-based violence in Russia.

Violent Incidents

Reports received in 2013 regarding incidents from 2012:

Before midnight on 11 August 2012, a 29-year-old political refugee named Michel from the Democratic Republic of Congo was attacked at the Butova train station. Three white Russian men under the age of 30 approached him and began beating him. They insulted him, using racial slurs such as “monkey” and saying that “a monkey cannot get rich.” They robbed him of all his possessions, stealing the cash he had on hand, his two mobile phones, a guitar, and his passport. The attackers quickly fled after robbing him. There were no immediate witnesses to the attack, but as Michel began to make his way back to the train station, the police arrived. After they arrived at the scene of the attack and saw that the assailants had fled, the police did not take any further action to find them. They escorted Michel away in an ambulance to the hospital.

As a result of the attack, Michel sustained injuries all over his body, particularly his head. He was treated at a Russian hospital and filed a police report with the transportation authorities at the Prospekt Mira metro station. Michel is now fully recovered. This was the first physical attack he had suffered during his three-month stay in Russia; he remains in Russia and has not experienced further violence.

Reports of incidents in 2013:

On the afternoon of 29 March, John, a 28-year-old man from Guinea, returned after a break to his job distributing flyers in the underground passage of Prospekt Vernadskogo metro station. As he started working, two Russians of 25-30 years approached him holding bottles of vodka and asked, “otkuda?” (‘Where are you from?’) He did not understand what they were saying. Then, one of them grabbed his coat. John pushed his hand away and caused him to drop the bottle he was holding. The bottle smashed on the ground. The man then made John understand that he had to pay for a new one, but John had no money. The man grabbed him and continued talking, but John could not understand what he was saying. The man punched him on the right side of his face. The other man punched him on the other side of the head. Two passers-by stopped and helped him escape.

His right eye was hurting, so he went to a drugstore, and was recommended to go to the nearest clinic. The clinic informed him that they did not treat eyes. He went to a second medical center, but they could not treat his eye either. They gave him the address of a third clinic. There, he was told that they only treated Moscow residents. However, a Nigerian lady in the waiting room saw him and intervened, saying he was a student, and offering her help as a translator. They agreed to examine him. His eyes were checked and he was given medication. The clinic informed him that he could get direct emergency care if his condition was due to an attack, but the attack had to be reported to the police. Being afraid of having his documents checked, John refused. They had to write down that the cause of his injury was a fall and thus could not offer him immediate treatment for free. However, he was advised to come back for an appointment the next Monday. That day, when he came, alone, he could not make himself understood and waited three hours without anybody attending him. He left and went to MPC Medical Advice Center the next day.

He suffered intense pain and swelling in his right eye and grazes on the left side of the forehead. It is the first time John has been attacked in the months he has been in Moscow (less than a year). He does not know why the two men attacked him, but it was obvious that they were drunk.

On 10 April, just before 5pm, Henry, a 39-year-old man from Ivory Coast, was walking into Polezhaevskaya metro station in order to distribute flyers. He saw a group of four Russian men beating up two other Russian men at the top of the escalator. The latter were already almost unconscious when he saw the attack. The attackers then left the two men lying on the ground. As they were walking towards the exit, they passed the place where Henry was standing and one of the men (who smelt of alcohol) punched him in the face, on the right side near the ear, and walked off. After walking about 10 meters, the man turned, saw Henry still standing at the same place and started walking back towards him. Henry started running in order to escape further attack. The attackers left.

Passers-by who had witnessed the first attack had called the police, who arrived promptly and managed to catch two of the attackers as they were leaving the station. The police then called an ambulance for the men by the escalator. Henry went back to his work.

He suffered pain in his right ear, which passed quickly. He did not notify to the police that he had been hit as well, because at the time he did not think the attack he had suffered was serious. He did not file any official report later because his documents were outdated. Henry now feels fear when he walks in the street. This is the first time Henry has been attacked in his 11 months in Moscow.

On 27 May, around 11pm, Gregory, a 25-year-old man from Congo, was moving to a new apartment, carrying his bags on the metro. He was standing on the platform of Mayakovskaya metro station, using his cell phone, when two Russian men, aged 30-35, approached him and asked him to hand them his phone. He refused, and they punched him. He fell to the ground. Three more Russians approached and together they pushed him onto the train tracks and stabbed him in the foot. Two women were with the attackers, and did not intervene. Gregory fell unconscious.

He woke up some time later at the police station at Komsomolskaya. He discovered that all his possessions had gone, including his money, phone, documents, and an official paper acknowledging that his passport had been stolen several years ago. The police did not take a report or offer any legal assistance. They called an ambulance, and he was taken to hospital. The hospital treated his wounds and let him go.

Gregory suffered a large cut to the bottom of his foot, and other cuts and bruises. This is the first time Gregory has been attacked in his two years in Moscow.

Around 4pm on a day in July (exact date not known), a 32-year-old man named Eric from Ivory Coast was attacked outside the Shelkovskaya metro station where he was passing out advertisements. A white Russian man, aged 27-30 years old, approached him and, without warning, punched him in the chest. Before Eric could react, four more white Russian males approached him saying "Russia is for Russians." The assailants quickly fled afterwards. A co-worker of the victim (an Eastern European woman) witnessed the attack and summoned the metro police. When the police arrived and saw that the men had already left the scene, they took no further action.

As a result of the attack, Eric suffered chest pains. He did not seek medical treatment immediately, as he feared going to the hospital because he did not have the required migration documents. He went to see a pharmacist after the attack and was given some medication to treat the pain. He did not file a police report at the time because he again feared being caught without documentation. Eric recovered from the attack, which was the first physical attack he has suffered during his almost two year stay in Russia. However, he was attacked again in September (report below).

Around 6pm on 27 August, Karl, a 24-year-old man from Ivory Coast, was handing out advertisements at the Mayakovskaya metro station. A drunk Russian man under 30 approached another Russian man, who was also handing out flyers, and attacked him. He then turned to Karl and grabbed him by the collar. He tried to provoke Karl to respond and fight back, but he initially resisted. Then the man hit him, so Karl began to fight back. The attacker ran to a pay phone and began making phone calls. Witnesses to the attack urged Karl to leave, fearing that the drunk man was calling the police or additional people to join the fight.

Karl sought medical attention at the MPC Medical Advice Center. He suffered severe swelling and pain in his hand, and grazes on his leg. He did not report the attack to the police because he does not speak Russian and does not have legitimate documents. It is the first time he has been attacked since arriving in Moscow in May 2012.

Around 8pm on 1 September, a 38-year-old man named Benjamin from the Democratic Republic of Congo was distributing flyers outside the front of the Leningradskiy railway station. He was suddenly punched on the left side of his head by an attacker from behind. As he turned to see who had done it, six Russian men, aged around 25-30, jumped on him and started beating him. They began shouting things like "black, what are you doing here? Go away!" He managed to grab hold of one of them and started to fight back, but the other five continued to hit him from behind. Eventually they began to disperse and left him on the street. He could not follow them as his head was hurting too badly. Witnesses were passing by as it happened but nobody stopped to help him.

Benjamin suffered intense pain in his head and as a result, could not sleep for two nights. He also experienced severe swelling in his left cheek, bleeding inside his mouth, and cuts on his knee. He sought medical help at MPC's Medical Advice Center. He did not file a report with the police because he does not have documentation, and says that friends of his who have sought help from the police have always been asked to show their documents before anything further is done. It is the second time that he has been attacked in his two years living in Moscow.

In the early evening in late September (exact date not known), Eric, the same 32-year-old man from Ivory Coast that was attacked in July, was attacked again outside the Mendeleevskaya metro station where he was passing out advertisements. One white Russian man (age unknown) exited the metro and approached him, gesturing in a way that implied he wanted to kill him. Eric responded by saying "thank you"; this angered the man, who then punched him in the head. Eric immediately went down into the metro to get the police, but by the time they arrived back at the scene of the assault, the attacker had already fled. Two Congolese men who were near Eric at the time witnessed the attack. It does not appear that the police took any further action once they realized that the attacker had fled.

Eric did not seek medical treatment immediately after the attack and has since recovered from his injuries. He did not file a police report at the time because he feared being caught without documentation. This was the second physical attack he had suffered during his almost two year stay in Russia; the previous one occurred in July 2013.

Around 2am on 24 September, Yusuf, a 17-year-old man from Guinea Conakry, was driving his taxi and was stopped by a Caucasian man, possibly Armenian, aged 30-35, who asked for a ride to Vladykino metro station. When they arrived, the man asked him to drive into a car park near the station. Yusuf saw that there was a guard at the entrance so was confident enough to drive in. However, he found that the man had two friends waiting for him, possibly an Armenian and an Azerbaijani, both aged 30-35. The man asked him to open the back doors and let his friends in. Yusuf told him that this had been his last job for the night and he was not taking any more customers. The man started to hit him and punch him in the face, before forcing the back doors open and letting his friends in. The attack continued and Yusuf struggled to defend himself and get out of the car. However, the man produced a knife and threatened him. He forced him to give him everything he had: his money, phone, car keys, documents, vehicle documents, driving license, jacket and shoes. The attackers then pushed him out of the car and drove away in it.

As well as losing everything he had, Yusuf suffered a swollen cheek, bleeding nose and sprained wrist. He sought help at the MPC Medical Advice Center. He also reported the incident to the police at Vladykino, who treated him well. They told him they would check the security cameras and advised him to contact his embassy to replace lost documents. This is the second time Yusuf has been attacked in his one year and two months in Moscow.

Around midnight on 28 September, Jacques, a 26-year-old man from Guinea, was heading home from work. While on the platform waiting for the train at the Yugo-Zapadnaya station, someone hit him on the head from behind. He was knocked to the ground, and two other men joined in the attack. They said "N***er, go home" several times. It is not clear if the three perpetrators were together prior to the attack, or if they were unconnected bystanders who chose to join in. Jacques was punched and kicked several times. No one at the metro station tried to stop the attack, assist him, or call the police. His backpack was stolen, which had his passport in it. He was beaten several times in the head.

Jacques suffered a sprained wrist, and several cuts and bruises on his head and torso. He experienced headaches for two weeks following the attack and finally sought medical treatment at MPC's Medical Advice Center. Jacques did not file a police report because he was previously attacked in June of this year and the police did not do anything.

On the morning of the 4 October, Joseph, a 29-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo was working handing out flyers at Krasnopresnenskaya metro station. A Russian man approached him and asked for a lighter, but he told him he did not have one. The man started to walk away, but then turned back and once again asked for a lighter. When Joseph said no, the man punched him in the chest. Joseph quickly ran into the metro and the man did not follow.

Fortunately, Joseph was wearing a padded jacket and did not sustain any injuries. He did not report the incident to the police because he says he has no interest in talking to them. This is the sixth time he has been attacked (four of which were by the same man on consecutive days) since his arrival in Moscow in June 2011. One of these attacks took place in June 2012 and was reported in the Task Force's last Annual Report.

At around midnight on 16 October, Dawud, a 40-year-old man from Ivory Coast, was driving his taxi and received a call from a friend in Mitino asking him to come and collect him. He drove to Mitino, met his friend and they stood talking outside of the car for a few minutes. Five young men from the Caucasus, whom he had met before, approached them. The men were armed with guns and knives. They forced Dawud and his friend into the car and told them to drive. They drove outside of Moscow, beyond the MKAD ring-road, and into the forest. Shortly after arriving in the forest, Dawud's friend escaped from the car and ran away. The men threatened Dawud, took his wallet and phone, and asked for the pin-codes for his credit cards. He gave the code for one, and one of the men left to find a bank. He took out 14000r and called to say the code was correct. The men asked how much money was in the account; Dawud said he was not sure and they began to hit him. The men then asked for the code for the second card: he said he did not know it. They turned on Dawud and continued beating him. He eventually managed to escape from the car and half ran, half crawled to the road. He tried to stop a car, but it hit him in the side. One car stopped at a crossroads and he attempted to open the door but the man locked it and drove away. After failing to get any cars to stop, he grabbed the roof-rack of a car that had slowed down at a traffic light, pulled himself onto the roof as it was driving, and hit the screen to get the driver's attention. Eventually the driver stopped and understood that Dawud had been attacked, as he said "bandit, bandit" to help explain what had happened. The man drove him to the nearest electric train station and he found his friend also waiting there. They had to wait an hour for a train and came into Moscow at 5:30am.

Dawud suffered a deep wound in his chin, as well as pain throughout his body, especially in his side where the car hit him. He sought help at MPC's Medical Advice Center where he was given painkillers and a basic dressing, then referred to a hospital for stitches. He was initially interested in reporting to the police, but later changed his mind, expressing fear and doubt that it would come to anything. This is the second time that Dawud has been attacked in his 14 months in Moscow.

Around 8pm on 30 November, Robert, a 27-year-old man from Ivory Coast, was standing by himself on a train station in Moscow Region on his way home from work. He noticed three 18-20-year-old Russian-speaking men approach the area where he was standing. The men did not immediately engage him, but as the train approached one of them pulled a heavy iron rod out of his jacket and struck Robert in the jaw. Robert was momentarily dazed and fell to the ground, and the man with the pipe then proceeded to kick him while he was on the ground. The three men then fled the scene. One bystander helped Robert get up but then got on the train and left him; there were many other witnesses but no one else helped: they all got on the train and it pulled away.

Robert suffered severe pain and swelling in his jaw, and struggled to eat solid foods. He received help at MPC's Medical Advice Center, and was referred to a specialist for an x-ray. His jaw may need to be wired, and MPC is working with partners at Civic Assistance Committee to find funding for this. Robert did not report to the police because of his irregular visa status. This is the first time Robert has been attacked since moving to Moscow one and a half years ago.

Institutional Harassment

At around 8pm on 1 November, police raided an apartment in Lyubertsy, where 14 African migrants were living. The eight people present at the time were arrested and taken to a police station; they were detained for several hours without having their documents checked; several of them had legitimate migration document but were not given an opportunity to show them. The police took photos and fingerprints of each person. After approximately three hours, they were asked for their documents. The main tenant (who sublets the apartment to the other tenants) was asked to pay 6,000 roubles, after which they were all released.

On the evening of 12 December, the police raided the same apartment and detained eight people. They did not take photos or fingerprints, but kept them there for about four hours. They fined the main tenant 10,000 roubles and released six people. The remaining two were kept overnight on suspicion of owning fraudulent documents. They were fined and released the next morning.

On the evening of 25 December, the police raided the apartment again and detained five people. No photos or fingerprints were taken but the people were held for several hours, then fined 10,000 roubles before being releasing.

The tenants are now looking for a new apartment to try to avoid further incidents of this type.

Task Force News

In 2013, the Task Force launched a Facebook page, at www.facebook.com/MPCRacialTaskForce. The page exists to offer information about the Task Force, updates on our work and upcoming events, and news and information regarding racism and hate crime in Russia.

The Task Force held three Community Events in the course of 2013, to provide support and advice to the African community in Moscow. In March, the event took place during Racism Awareness Week (March 17-23), and offered education about the work of the Task Force, statistics and information about racism in Russia, and games focused on highlighting safety tips for living in Moscow. The September event began with an overview of the work of the Task Force, then focused on building Russian language skills for everyday situations, especially for those newly arrived in Moscow. Participants had a chance to practice their Russian skills in mock 'shops' and 'metro ticket desks', where correct answers were rewarded with actual food items and metro tickets. In December, a third Community Event focused on the topic of race-based harassment, and how to respond to it. Participants shared and discussed their own experiences and the best ways to react in difficult situations. The Task Force offered tips and suggestions, but also encouraged peer-to-peer learning and support. After the discussion, we moved to a time of celebration of the upcoming holidays, and enjoyed dancing and the sharing of Christmas gifts. All three events concluded with a time of lunch and socializing.

In addition to the March Community Event, the Task Force marked Racism Awareness Week with several other initiatives. We organized a viewing of the movie, *Remember the Titans*, at the American Center, followed by a discussion about the movie and about racism in Russia. We presented the findings from our 2012 Annual Report at the UNHCR Working Group on Tolerance. We also created a handout giving advice to potential witnesses of an attack, which we distributed to the wider MPC community.

On June 19th, we marked World Refugee Day with a party for refugee children in Moscow. The event was attended by 120 children, and included outdoor games, juggling demonstrations, face painting, and arts and crafts. Lunch was also provided.

In December, we opened a new center for our clothing distribution program, which will allow us to process more clothing donations and distribute them more effectively to those most in need. We

are currently running a winter clothing drive for migrants and refugees, and have been very grateful for all the donations received so far. Please contact us if you would like to donate any clothes, either individually or together with your office or organization (taskforce@mpcss.org).

Conclusion

Racial violence and harassment continue to shape the experience of African migrants in Moscow, and fear and hopelessness often prevent them from attempting to seek legal redress. According to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, to which Russia is a signatory and which is now considered to be part of customary international law, all people, regardless of “race, colour... language... national or social origin... or other status”, have a right to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3). However, our experience suggests that many migrants have legitimate fears that their rights will only be upheld in the presence of valid migration documents, and even then, that racial discrimination will adversely affect the enforcement of their rights.

The reports recorded in 2013 also imply that theft targeting African migrants is prevalent. Although we have insufficient data to suggest that they are more vulnerable to this than Russians or other migrants, a popular perception that they are less likely to seek or receive legal justice no doubt makes them an easier target for criminals. Compounding this perception, this year has seen a Moscow government crackdown on undocumented migration,¹ and the launch of regular police raids on apartments where people suspected of irregular visa status are living² - as demonstrated by the case of institutional harassment recorded above. These developments are likely to heighten the fears many migrants have of turning to the authorities for help when they have been attacked or harassed.

The fact that the majority of African migrants with whom we work have experienced violence, and all have experienced harassment, demonstrates the seriousness and persistence of the issue. We therefore urge Russian law enforcement more actively to pursue and bring to justice perpetrators of violence and theft, without discrimination regarding the race or status of the victim. We also call on the Russian government to strongly condemn racially-motivated violence and harassment.

Meanwhile we will continue to support victims of attacks and abuse, and to help them where we can to lessen the risk of further violence. It is our hope that by giving these people a voice, we will be able to contribute to a broader discussion about the experience of migrants, as one step towards reducing the level of racially-motivated violence and harassment in Moscow.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this report, or would like to learn more about the work that we do to document racially-motivated violence and harassment, please contact Penny Grenfell, Coordinator, MPC Task Force on Racial Violence and Harassment, at taskforce@mpcss.org.

¹ ‘Detention camp set up after Moscow migrant crackdown’, Ria Novosti and the Moscow News, 13 Aug 2013, <http://themoscownews.com/local/20130813/191845302.html>; and ‘Russian Police Crack Down on Migrants, “Ethnic Crime”, on Moscow Subway’, Ria Novosti, 14 Sept 2013, <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20130914/183441954.html>

² ‘Police to Raid Migrants' Apartments Every Friday’, Moscow Times, 21 Oct 2013 <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/police-to-raid-migrants-apartments-every-friday/488209.html>