



MPC Social Services

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Task Force on Racial Violence and Harassment Second Biannual Report 2015

Introduction

Since 2001, Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy's Task Force against 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. However, it 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 racially 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 less frequently than physical attacks.

Nevertheless, we attempt to give an overall picture of the experiences of racism *among the particular community that we serve* by running broader surveys alongside our one-on-one interviews with individual victims of race-motivated violence. In a survey in 2013, 100% of respondents said that they had experienced harassment during their time in Moscow, and 58% had experienced physical attacks. In later surveys we limited the period in question to the year of the report, to try and identify patterns over the course of several years. In the latest survey, we asked respondents if they had experienced violence and harassment during the second half of 2015. We also introduced a question about whether they believed the situation of racism in Moscow had improved or worsened since their arrival in Moscow. We hope that by gathering regular information with a more limited time frame, we will be able to identify patterns over the coming years.

In this biannual report, we begin with a summary of our survey results before describing the particular violent incidents brought to our attention throughout the second half of 2015. The physical attacks noted in the Violent Incidents section below are those for which we received a full report, rather than all incidents mentioned in the survey.

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

In the survey conducted from July through December of 21 migrants and refugees, **60% of respondents (12 people) reported experiencing harassment during the second half of 2015**. In addition, **47% (9 people) were victims of physical attacks**.

During the second half of 2015, the Task Force recorded **7 incident reports of physical attacks**:

- 5 physical attacks with an articulated racist motive (accompanied by racist verbal abuse or symbols)
- 2 physical attacks suspected to be racially motivated

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

Survey Results

In a survey conducted in July through December, the Task Force gathered information from 21 migrants and refugees on their experiences of living in Moscow during the second half of 2015. Of those surveyed, 10 (48%) were women and 11 (52%) were men. The countries of origin of the respondents were as follows:

- Cameroon: 6 (29% of respondents)
- Democratic Republic of Congo: 5 (24%)
- Guinea: 2 (10%)
- Nigeria: 2 (10%)
- Ghana: 2 (10%)
- Congo-Brazzaville: 1 (5%)
- Mali: 1 (5%)
- Senegal: 1 (5%)
- Uzbekistan: 1 (5%)

The age breakdown was as follows:

- Younger than 15 years old: 1 (5% of respondents)
- 15-20 years old: 1 (5%)
- 21-30 years old: 9 (43%)
- 31-40 years old: 7 (33%)
- 41-50 years old: 3 (14%)

The length of time they had been in Moscow was as follows:

- Less than one year: 6 (30% of respondents)
- 1-5 years: 11 (55%)
- 6-10 years: 3 (15%)
- 11-15 years: 0 (0%)
- 16-20 years: 0 (0%)
- No response: 1 (5%)

Racially motivated harassment

In the survey, 60% of those surveyed (12 people) said that they had personally experienced racially motivated harassment in the second half of 2015: they had been “shouted at, insulted, or bothered” because of racism. Among men, 64% had experienced harassment, whereas the figure was 56% among women. 20% said they had experienced harassment more than once per week, 20%

experienced it every week and 20% every month. This totals 60% who experienced racially motivated harassment every month or more.

59% of migrants (10 people) who responded to the survey experienced harassment by the police in the second half of 2015, including 75% of men surveyed and 44% of women surveyed. 60% of respondents experienced police harassment once per month or more.

Racially motivated violence

47% of those surveyed (9 people) had personally experienced what they believed to be racially motivated violence during the second part of 2015: they had been “hit, pushed, or [physically] hurt” because of what they interpreted as racism. 56% of men and 40% of women had been attacked.

Opinion on racism

Of those surveyed, 7% (1 person) believes that the situation of racism has improved since their arrival in Moscow. 93% (13 people) believe that the situation has neither improved nor worsened since their arrival in Moscow. 33% (7 people) did not respond to this question, possibly because they have been living in Moscow for a short period and thus cannot comment on the changes in racist attitudes over time.

Commentary

The overall harassment figures among women were much higher than in the previous survey. The amount of respondents who experienced harassment in the second half of the year is the same as in the first part of the year. The high percentage of racially motivated attacks among women in the surveys may be partially explained by the fact that we made a concerted effort to survey people who have not yet fully adapted to life in Russia: most of our respondents have lived in Moscow for approximately one year or less. We also surveyed people who share an apartment with existing MPC clients, but have not yet come to our center. The goal of this outreach was to acquire more accurate information about the number of hate crimes, as well as to help newcomers in their adaptation process by providing more information for prevention. Survey participants received Task Force safety handouts in English and French, which are available for visitors of our center.

Overall, the survey participants in the second half of the year were young, averaging 20 to 30 years old. The majority of respondents have been in Moscow for less than one year to just over a year. Those who have been in Moscow for up to ten years typically reported improvement in the situation since their early years in Moscow. It seems that migrants who have lived in Moscow for more than two years have generally already integrated and either are less likely to face the same difficulties as newcomers or no longer recognize incidents as racist. The number of respondents who reported harassment in December 2015 is lower than in December 2014, where 77% of respondents experienced racial harassment among the 22 people interviewed. In December 2015, we surveyed nearly equal numbers of men and women, whereas in previous surveys the number of men was always greater. For this biannual report, we made a concerted effort to survey more women.

To compare December 2014 and December 2015, the percentage of respondents reporting physical violence was lower in 2015 (reduced from 68% to 47%). The percentage of people who were attacked between July and December was also lower in comparison to the period from January to June, when 59% of respondents reported being attacked. The December surveys showed a very small difference in the numbers of attacks against men and women, whereas previously, a significantly greater percentage of men (65%) reported being attacked than women (25% in the first part of the year). The number of men reporting harassment is still greater than the number of women, but the number of women who reported police harassment is twice as high as the number in the first half of the year.

The statistics suggests that the lower harassment figures do not necessarily represent an improvement. Instead, they may indicate that incidents that would previously have been reported as harassment have now turned violent. A larger sample size and further investigation would be required to verify this trend.

Violent Incidents

On the 17th of June, Sophia, a 7-year-old girl originally from Congo-Brazzaville, was attacked by a Russian girl of the same age. Sophia died two days later. The youngest victim that the Task Force against Racism has ever reported on, Sophia's story is one of the most difficult to tell. Her attacker, Julia, had called Sophia a nigger two weeks earlier. At the time, Sophia didn't know the meaning of the word, so she responded by telling Julia, "No, you are!" On the day of the attack, Julia was with her family having a barbecue in the street when she saw Sophia. Julia said to Sophia, "You remember you called me a nigger?" and began to hit her with a stick. A 10-year-old witness, Dima, intervened to stop the beating. Sophia went home distressed, and asked her mother what a nigger was. She was sad, asking "Why was I born black?" Her mother bathed her and massaged her to check for injuries but found no bruises, and Sophia insisted she wasn't in pain. The next day, Sophia stayed at home and said she didn't want to play with her friends. In the evening she vomited. Sophia had sickle-cell anemia and goes through periods of illness, but vomiting was extremely unusual. She said she wanted to sleep and went to bed. The next morning, the 19th of June, her mother found her dead. She called an ambulance and they tried to resuscitate her, but were unable. The doctors reported that she died of internal bleeding. The police came and Dima told them about the attack. The police conducted an investigation.

NB: This attack was reported in August, so it is included in the second half of the year.

Early Sunday morning, at 2:00 on the 12th of August, Oumar, an 18-year-old man from Senegal, was standing near the toilet in the bar Tryum near the metro Oktyabrskoe Pole. A drunk Russian man about 22 to 24 years old approached him and asked, "Where are you from?" Oumar replied "I'm from here." The Russian man said, "Speak to me normally!", and Oumar responded "I am speaking normally." The Russian man said "You're a negro, a black, why do you speak such good Russian?" Then the man grabbed Oumar by the neck and pushed him against the wall. Oumar pushed him away and said "Go away! Why are you doing this?" Then a second Russian man who was sober and about the same age as the first attacker punched Oumar and he fell down and lost consciousness for a moment. Oumar quickly regained consciousness and got up. He saw the man leaving the club, but the guard was asking him why he had punched him. Other witnesses were following and wanted to hit the attacker, but Oumar said "No need, I'll follow him myself." Oumar followed him saying "Let's fight one-on-one." The Russian man said no and walked away. The next day, Oumar's jaw was swollen, so an MPC volunteer took him to the hospital and an x-ray showed that he had a broken jaw. His jaw needed to be reset with a wire, meaning that he could not eat solid food for four weeks.

Friday evening, around 21:00 on the 21th of August, Mike, a 33-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was walking across Manezhnaya square with another African friend who was walking slightly ahead of him. Five Russian men about 20 years old were standing there. They started shouting at him "What are you doing here? Where are you from? Black! American! Drug-addict! You gave us these sanctions – go back to your America!" He walked past and ignored them. The men attacked Mike from behind. He couldn't see how many people were attacking him or what they were using to hit him: he fell to the ground and banged his head. They continued kicking and punching him. Some passersby intervened to stop the attack and helped Mike up. He ran to the police officers near the gates to Aleksandrovskiy Sad. The police called an ambulance for him. His head was hurting and he doesn't know what happened next or whether the police officers pursued the attackers. His friend managed to run away and was not harmed. Mike's shoulder and left arm were badly injured: he needed a sling for four weeks. He also had cuts on his

eye and right arm, as well as pain in his head and back. He has been in Moscow for six years and was attacked at least twice before this incident.

One Sunday evening in October around 16:00, Fred, a 20-year-old man from Cameroon, was riding the metro from the south on the grey line going toward the center. Three Russian men around 20 to 25 years old entered the metro and started insulting Fred, calling him a monkey and making offensive gestures (imitating a monkey). He changed seats, but they followed him. Then one of the Russian men hit Fred on the cheek, while another called the police (presumably to blame Fred for starting a fight). When the police came, a Russian lady said Fred was innocent. Fred and the attacker were taken to the police station at metro Blvd. Dmitriy Donskovo for ten minutes, and then the police let him go.

On Sunday the 12th of November, Ojo, a 39 year-old woman from Cameroon, was going to church at metro Cherkizovskaya. She exited the metro and was waiting at the bus stop for her friends when a police car pulled up and a police officer about 30 to 35 years old asked for her passport. He discovered that her migration card had expired. Her friends said they didn't have their passports with them, so the police searched their bags, took the 5000 rubles they found inside, and started insulting them. Ojo believes this bribe-taking was racially motivated because her passport and visa were in order. The police officer targeted Ojo and her friends because they were African, probably suspecting that they wouldn't have their documents and using this vulnerability to take their money and shout at them in Russian. She says the police often wait for Africans on Sunday mornings near the metro exit.

At night on the 31st of December, Lilia, a 44 year-old woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and her friend Thomas were going home from a party at the Bolshevo train station outside of Moscow. Lilia was waiting for Thomas when three Russian men approached her. One of the men started talking to her, but she didn't answer. When the three men saw Thomas coming, they attacked him with a knife. Lilia tried to stop the man with the knife by pushing him away, but another man punched her in the forehead and they kicked Thomas in the jaw. The men took Lilia's bag and ran away. Her bag contained two tablets, her passport, and other documents. The only witness was a taxi driver who helped Lilia and Thomas to follow the Russian men, but they were unsuccessful in catching them. The taxi driver brought Lilia and Thomas to the police station, but the incident was not registered and the police officer asked them to come back the next day. They didn't return. Lilia suffered swelling in her forehead for two weeks after the attack. She sought medical help from a local trauma center and received medicine from MPC's medical advice center. Thomas suffered pain in the ribs and received medical help at the local trauma center. A chest X-ray showed that he had lung problems, so he was referred to a TB clinic in Moscow for another X-ray, where the doctors detected advanced-stage tuberculosis. He was immediately hospitalized. For Lilia, this was the first time she was attacked over the four years she has been in Moscow. Thomas had been insulted and harassed, but had never experienced a physical attack before.

Institutional Racism

Institutional racism accounts for a large part of the difficulty of living in Moscow as a person of color because it prevents or delays people from accessing essential services such as health care, public safety, and legal documentation. Our clients and volunteers have noted two particularly troubling examples of institutional racism, as described below.

Tuberculosis dispensaries have refused treatment and testing for Africans, particularly in the smaller cities just outside of Moscow. People who live together in close quarters with someone who may have tuberculosis are at high risk of contracting the disease themselves, but are often unable to get tested, or are told to go to a dispensary in Moscow, where they are often sent back to their local dispensary in an endless cycle of refusing testing and treatment.

After giving birth in a Russian hospital, African women are often denied their children's birth certificates and told they need to pay for this service that is a parent's legal right. With the assistance of MPC and Civic Assistance volunteers, they are typically able to receive their birth certificates without paying, but sometimes years pass before they are able to do so.

Conclusion

The reports and survey results continue to reveal the serious problem of racism in Moscow. It is positive that some survey respondents believe that the situation of racism has improved during their time in Moscow, even if that perception is not shared by the majority of Africans that we work with. It is also positive that a smaller proportion of respondents experienced harassment in 2015 as compared to 2014. However, it is clear that the problem of racism persists. In the second half of the year, we saw more cases of institutional racism, particularly police harassment, discrimination in hospitals, and discrimination in the educational system. This shows that racism is not limited to an extremist minority in Russian society.

An improvement in the situation of racism rests on two factors: a) the punishment of perpetrators of racially motivated crimes and b) the empowerment of those people in Russian society who are ready to stand up to racism when they see it, but don't know how to do so. Greater awareness about racism in Russia and a broader societal discussion about the issue and about the legal rights of people who experience racism would help to motivate those passersby who witness attacks, harassment or discrimination but are afraid or uncertain how they can help. To this end, we will continue to record the incidents which are reported to us, endeavoring to support and give a voice to those who experience racism in Moscow.

Task Force News

The Task Force against Racism held two community events in the second half of 2015 and four community events in total this year to provide support and advice to the African community in Moscow. November's community event included advice about how to stay warm in winter and a presentation on how to deal with harassment from the police by a human rights activist from OVD-Info (ovdinfo.org). We also played some music and served lunch prepared by a volunteer to raise the community's spirits. In December's event, advocates from our partner organization Civic Assistance (www.refugee.ru) presented on the rights of migrants and the procedure for applying for refugee status. The Civic Assistance advocates also answered questions from participants. This personal meeting with human rights advocates who protect migrants' rights in Moscow was very important to counteract some of the stereotypes and illusions about the state of refugees in Russia. We believe this meeting encouraged future communication and support of this community in registering their status on a legal basis. It was a Christmas event, so participants were sent home with presents including warm hats, scarves, gloves, socks, hand cream, and chocolate to help them stay warm.

The Children's Club for Francophone African children continues to run in partnership with Civic Assistance's Adaptation and Education Center for Refugee Children. Volunteers teach the children French, Russian, math, and other subjects with the aim of improving the children's readiness to apply for a place in Russian schools. On the 18th of September, in partnership with Civic Assistance, the Task Force against Racism organized a back-to-school party for children and mothers who attend the Children's Center of Civic Assistance to celebrate the start of the school year. An art workshop was held for children, while children's mothers and volunteers organized activities and served food. All of the children went home with new backpacks full of school supplies. Twelve children participated in the event.

In the second week of October, during the Action Week against Racism organized by Football Against Racism in Europe (www.farenet.org), the Task Force against Racism and the Moscow Youth Soccer League (www.moscow-soccer.ru) organized a tournament for children ages 3 to 6 and for adults, where 10 players (two teams) participated. As a result of this event, we met new members of the African community in Moscow who had not yet participated in the Task Force against Racism's programs. Another achievement during this week was the organization of a football training workshop at one of Moscow's technical schools for 16-18-year-old Russians. Five African football players went to the school to coach teenagers for their game at the Moscow Youth Soccer League tournament. Many of these teenagers tend toward right-wing ideas, so at the beginning they showed some skepticism, but by the end of this training workshop they shook hands with their African coaches and showed them great respect. At their next meeting at the tournament itself, the Russian students joyfully greeted their African coaches. Shortly afterwards, several of the Russian players who had not been at the initial training workshop expressed hatred toward black people and a desire to beat them, but the students who had participated replied "What, are you crazy?" and went on to describe the positive training session they had with the African coaches.

In November, the MPC Task Force participated in a roundtable discussion organized by Goethe Institute Moscow at the Tolerance Center to discuss methods of preventing xenophobia in Russia.

In November and December, women from our community center made Christmas cards and souvenirs to be sold at holiday markets around Moscow. The Task Force's goal was to give single mothers with infants and young children an opportunity to earn some money and learn new skills. Two of the women hosted a table at one of the holiday markets and had the chance to directly sell their crafts, which was a positive integrative experience for both the Russian public and the women.

In December, two people from Cameroon gave a presentation about their country and their lives in Moscow at a private school in the town of Mytishchi. The presentation invited students ages 9 to 17 and their parents. The result was positive and encouraging on both sides. The teachers, students, and parents confessed that they knew little about Africa. They asked questions about life in African countries. When the Russian audience asked what difficulties Africans face in Moscow, they were generally surprised by the answers, including the different food available and the difficult climate. The African guests asked the children why Russians call them monkeys in the metro. This genuine exchange of questions aroused compassion and greater mutual understanding.

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 Anna Voronkova, Coordinator, MPC Task Force against Racial Violence and Harassment, at taskforce@mpcss.org.