



MPC Social Services

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Task Force on Racial Violence and Harassment Second Biannual Report 2014

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, 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. We repeated this survey in June 2014, and again in December 2014. However, while the 2013 survey asked people about their experiences since their first arrival in Moscow, the later surveys were limited to experiences during 2014. We hope that by gathering regular information with a more limited timeframe, 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 2014. The physical attacks noted 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

Through a survey conducted among 22 migrants and refugees, **77% of respondents reported experiencing harassment during 2014**. In addition, **68% had been victims of physical attacks**.

During the second half of 2014, the Task Force recorded **6 physical attacks**:

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

Survey Results

In a survey conducted in December, the Task force gathered information from 22 migrants and refugees on their experiences of living in Moscow during 2014. Of those surveyed, 64% were male and 36% were female. The countries of origin of the respondents were as follows:

- Democratic Republic of Congo – 27%
- Nigeria - 23%
- Ivory Coast - 14%
- Guinea 10 %
- Cameroon - 10%
- Gambia - 4%
- Mali – 4%
- Kenya - 4%
- South Africa 4%

Harassment

77% of those surveyed said that they had personally experienced racially motivated harassment in 2014: they had been “shouted at, insulted or bothered” because of racism. 32% (of the total number surveyed) said they had experienced harassment on a daily basis; a further 18%, every month; and 27% less than once a month. This totals 50% who experienced race-based harassment every month or more.

Race-based violence

68% of those surveyed had personally experienced what they believed to be racially motivated violence during 2014: they had been “hit, pushed or [physically] hurt” because of what they interpreted as racism. At least 27% had experienced physical attacks every month or more.

Commentary

The overall harassment figures are lower than in previous surveys: in June, 94% said they had experienced harassment, and in 2013, the figure was 100%. This may partially be explained by the increased number of women surveyed: 36% of respondents were female, compared to 12% in June and 11.5% in 2013. 63% of women surveyed had experienced harassment, compared to 79% of men. The majority of men who attend our drop-in center work in street-level advertising (for example, distributing flyers); the women we work with are typically less likely to have jobs which expose them on such a regular basis to street-level abuse.

The second reason for lower harassment figures may be related to the percentage reporting violence. Although 68% is not a major increase on 65% in June and 65.4% in 2013, among men, 93% said in the most recent survey they had experienced violence (compared to 50% among women). While we do not have a breakdown for violence experienced by men and women in previous surveys, the much higher proportion of male respondents previously indicates that reported violence among men was lower. The fact that 93% experienced violence in 2014 suggests that the lower harassment figures do not necessarily represent an improvement; rather, they may even indicate that more incidents that would previously have been reported as harassment have now turned violent. However, a larger sample size and further investigation would be required to verify this trend.

Violent Incidents

Around 5pm on a weekday in July, Dany, a 35-year-old man from Ivory Coast, was working in front of the Belarusskaya metro station, wearing a large placard and passing out flyers. Dany was approached by two young Russian-speaking men who seemed to be looking to provoke a fight. One of the men called Dany a “monkey” while the second man punched him in the chest. The two men then continued walking down the corridor until they came across a group of Central Asian men. There was a verbal exchange followed by a physical confrontation with this second group.

The violence against Dany was very brief and did not cause any serious physical harm. After the two men had left, another woman who was passing out flyers next to Dany attempted to comfort him by saying that it was normal and that he shouldn't get too upset about it. Dany did not go to the police or seek any medical attention after the incident.

He has been attacked and harassed on multiple other occasions in his three years in Moscow, including in November 2014 (see below).

On a weekday in the summer, Francis, a 27-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo, was taking the commuter train home from work between Yaroslavskiy Station and Mitishi, when he was confronted by two Russian-speaking men on an empty carriage. One of the men (approximately 30-40 years old) made a rude hand gesture towards Francis with his middle finger while the second man (approximately 17-19 years old) told Francis that he “does not like blacks”. Hoping to avoid a confrontation, Francis went to another carriage where there were many other passengers.

The young man followed Francis and continued to verbally harass him in Russian. Not speaking much Russian, Francis began responding in French, which appeared to escalate the situation further, so he decided to get off the train. When he attempted to get off at the next stop, the young man pushed him to the ground and began kicking and stomping on him. The young man reached for what appeared to be a small knife when an older Russian passenger (a man in his 50s) intervened and pulled the young man away. The older man kept the young man away from Francis until he was able to get off of the train.

The train carriage was full of people, but only one person intervened. Francis chose not to report the incident to the police because there was no major injury and because he was afraid that the police would not help him.

He has been attacked and harassed multiple times in the year he has been in Moscow.

Around 9pm on a weekday evening in early November, Adrien, a 45-year-old man from the Democratic Republic of Congo – was walking alone through Izmailovskiy Park on the way home from a friend's house. Adrien was stopped by a group of four Russian-speaking men who began asking him questions about where he was from and what he was doing in Moscow. The conversation started off friendly, but turned more aggressive when the group found out that Adrien had a job. One of the men shouted “Why should an African be allowed to work in our country when we can't even find work in our country?”

The group of four men then proceeded to surround Adrien and demand that he buy them alcohol. When Adrien said that he had no money to do so, the men grabbed him and tried to steal his bag. Adrien pushed them off, but they continued to grab at him. Adrien realized that the situation was becoming hostile and dangerous, so he broke free and ran towards a group of people walking in the park. The four men did not chase him, and he was able to escape without further incident.

Adrien did not sustain any serious injuries and chose not to report the incident to the police out of

fear because of his irregular migration status.

He has experienced violence and harassment multiple times during his one year in Moscow.

Around 9am on a morning in November, Dany, a 35-year-old man from Ivory Coast who was also attacked in July (see above), was working in front of Voykovskaya metro station, wearing an advertising placard. Dany was approached by two Russian-speaking men in their early thirties; there were many people working with flyers and placards but he was the only African and the only person the men approached. One of the men punched the placard that Dany was wearing so hard that it cracked. The two men then walked away. A witness approached Dany and expressed her sympathy, saying that not all Russians are like that and apologizing for the actions of the men.

Dany saw the men begin an altercation with a magazine vendor in the metro. Two police officers noticed the shouting and detained the young men. Although Dany had also been a victim of these two men, he chose not to come forward to the police out of fear because of his irregular migration status. He did not have any serious injuries and did not seek medical help.

He has been attacked and harassed on multiple other occasions in his three years in Moscow.

On the morning of 8th December, Kamara, a 34-year-old man from Gambia, was working at Vodny Stadion Metro station passing out flyers. A man approached him and swung his arm towards Kamara, saying something in Russian. Kamara had to jump to get out of the way. Other passers-by shook their heads in apparent disapproval of the man's actions, but nobody intervened. The man continued on his way. The next day, the man passed by again and repeated the action: he swung his arm and Kamara had to jump out of the way to avoid being hit. This continued every morning for two weeks. Each time Kamara was able to get out of the way in time. The attacks only ended when Kamara moved to work at a different metro station.

No physical contact was made and Kamara did not suffer any injuries or report to the police. However, he has concerns about working at the Vodny Stadion metro station in the future.

Kamara has experienced harassment on other occasions during his four months in Moscow.

Around 11am on Sunday, 23rd December, Karl, a 19-year-old man from Mali, was working in the Tushinskaya area posting flyers on the doors of apartment buildings. He was confronted by two Russian-speaking men in their mid-30s who told him to stop posting flyers and leave. One of the men struck Karl in the back of the head, causing him to fall to the ground, and then the pair proceeded to punch and kick him.

While this was taking place, one of the assailants made a phone call to some friends. Three men arrived in work uniforms (blue jumpsuits with fluorescent orange bands) and joined in beating Karl. They shouted at Karl and he shouted back, but he was not certain what the assailants were saying. Eventually, a witness got out of a vehicle and called the police and ambulance. The ambulance arrived while the assailants were walking away and Karl tried to get the medical workers to stop the men, but they refused. When the medical workers realized that Karl did not have a valid visa, they asked him to sign a sheet of paper, stopped the bleeding in his mouth, and told him to leave. The police never arrived.

Karl suffered pain and dizziness in his head, cuts and bruises to the face and hands, loose and bloody teeth and a 10mm gash on the inside of his lip. He sought help at MPC's Medical Advice Center, and may need stitches. MPC referred him to partners to help him file a police report.

This is the fifth or sixth time that Karl has been attacked during his two and a half years in Moscow.

Task Force News

The Task Force held two Community Events in the second half of 2014, to provide support and advice to the African community in Moscow. In October, the event included a review of the work of the Task Force, a Russian lesson with useful phrases for responding to harassment, and a workshop on sexual health – as well a time of lunch and fellowship. In December, the event included our survey on racial violence and harassment, a workshop on staying safe and healthy in the cold, games, food and Christmas festivities.

In October, we also launched a new Children's Club for African children without access to education, in partnership with the Children's Center of Civic Assistance. French, English and Russian-speaking volunteers work with two age groups to improve their literacy in French and Russian, as well as teaching math and other subjects, with the aim of improving the children's readiness to apply for places in Russian schools.

Conclusion

Despite the lower figures for harassment, the results of the survey regarding 2014 continue to reflect the persistent nature of racial violence and harassment in Moscow, and the full incident reports give insight into the unprovoked and unpunished nature of such abuse.

We will continue to strive to help victims of attacks, and where possible to reduce the risk of violence against those most often targeted. Our experience so far suggests that not all victims wish to share the full stories of the attacks they have faced, even if they are willing to report through the survey that such attacks took place. However, we continue to place a high importance on giving the opportunity to share their story if they wish to, to give them a voice, and to create a greater awareness of the experiences of Africans in Moscow, as one step towards reducing the level of racially-motivated violence and harassment in the city.

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.