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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Satanists Jailed for Ritual Murders

By Alexander Bratersky

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Seven self-confessed members of a Satanist sect were sentenced Monday by the Yaroslavl Regional Court to prison terms for killing four teenagers and desecrating their bodies in a 2008 initiation ritual.

The sentencing follows a similar case in May in St. Petersburg, where two men who called themselves Goths were handed nearly 20-year prison terms for drowning and cannibalizing a 16-year-old girl in January 2009.

The Yaroslavl group's ringleader, Nikolai Ogolobyak, 21, will spend 20 years in prison on charges of murder, robbery and desecrating a corpse. Five of his accomplices, including one girl, were handed sentences ranging from eight to 10 years on the same charges, while a sixth person received a two-year term, RIA-Novosti said.

An eighth suspect, Anton Makovkin, 21, known as Doctor Goth, was ruled insane and will be placed in a mental institution.

The court ruled that the group killed three high-school boys and one girl, cut apart their bodies and buried them. Komsomolskaya Pravda reported Monday that the victims were involved in the Gothic subculture and met with the sect members out of curiosity.

Most of the trial was closed to public because of the gruesome details of the incident, RIA-Novosti reported. Sergei Vanteyev, a lawyer for one of the suspects, committed suicide in May, local television reported.

The relatives of the victims criticized the verdict for being too light, with the mother of one of the murdered boys saying "this sentence was like an insult for us, and it was painful for us to hear that," Komsomolskaya Pravda reported.

But prosecutors said after the trial that 10 years was the maximum sentence the law allows for criminals who were underage when committing a crime, RIA-Novosti reported.

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