

# Wanted Man Speaks of Lynching, Scapegoating

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**The  Moscow Times**

A fugitive North Caucasus native wanted over an interracial brawl that triggered violent riots in December said he barely escaped a lynch mob and that the authorities are using him and his friends as scapegoats to appease nationalists.

The fight in Moscow left a football fan shot dead. The killing was blamed on North Caucasus natives, but only one of the five suspects was initially detained, which caused some 5,500 people to clash with police near the Kremlin walls during an unsanctioned rally to demand a fair investigation.

Ramzan Utarbiyev, a suspect who went into hiding after an arrest warrant was issued for him, released a [video](#) appeal, saying he and his friends were only defending themselves from violent fans.

In the undated video, which appeared on YouTube on Tuesday, Utarbiyev said he and his friend Aslan Cherkesov — whom police suspect of the killing — were trying to flag down a taxi when they saw that a "drunk mob was beating three of my friends."

They jumped into the fight to protect their friends and were soon detained by police, who kept them in detention for two days, but then released them apparently because their version of the incident was confirmed by footage from nearby surveillance cameras, he said.

Utarbiyev admitted that shots were fired during the brawl, but did not say who fired them.

While they were in detention, a group of drunk angry fans tried to storm the premises to lynch them, and an investigator told his mother that he cannot guarantee his safety, Utarbiyev said, adding that this prompted him to go on the run.

He said he is ready to turn himself in if the authorities guarantee a fair investigation into the incident, but added that he and his friends are being scapegoated.

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