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6 Go on Trial for Football Fan's Death

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The trial of six men from the North Caucasus accused of shooting dead a football fan, sparking race riots in Moscow, began with prosecution witnesses asking for state protection.

"This trial will be a difficult one. Apart from a criminal component, there is also another component, let's call it a political one," said Vitaly Chechulin, a lawyer for Artur Arsibiyev, one of the accused.

The six suspects fought with a group of Muscovites, mostly ethnic Slavs, last December. Days later, more than 30 people were injured when nationalists and football fans clashed with police and attacked ethnic minorities on Manezh Square.

Yana Falaleyeva, widow of the dead fan, Yegor Sviridov, said prosecution witnesses had asked the court for protection after she said the suspects made threatening gestures in court. She said she had also received threatening phone calls but did not know from whom.

"They were saying that I should stop appearing on television, that they would send me to my husband," Falaleyeva said.

Monday's hearing was adjourned until Aug. 9 after one of the suspects asked for a jury trial.

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