

Dozens Protest Killing of Chechens in Turkey

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ANKARA, Turkey — Dozens of protesters marched toward the Russian Consulate in Istanbul on Saturday to denounce the recent killing of three Chechens, a news agency reported. Chechen groups blame Russia's secret service for the killings of the men, who were allegedly involved with Chechen militants.

The three were gunned down near a park in Istanbul on Sept. 16, with shots apparently fired from a car that sped away. Their deaths increased to six the number of Chechens who have been killed in Turkey since 2008.

Turkey has a large ethnic Chechen community, and hundreds of people fleeing fighting in Chechnya have taken refuge here. The protesters included Chechens and members of Turkish pro-Islamic groups.

"God is Great!" and "Bring Russia, the murderer, to account," the demonstrators shouted, according to the independent Dogan news agency. It said police prevented the group from reaching the heavily guarded consulate.

Turkish authorities have refused to comment on the latest deaths, saying an investigation is under way. But the Istanbul-based pro-Chechen group, Imkander, has identified the victims of the Sept. 16 attack as Berg-Khazh Musayev, Rustam Altemirov and Zavrbek Amriyev.

Kavkaz Center, a web site sympathetic to the North Caucasus insurgency, described Musayev as a close ally of leading Chechen militant Doku Umarov. It said he went to Turkey more than a year ago for medical treatment for injuries sustained during fighting in Chechnya.

Altemirov was the subject of an arrest warrant issued by a Moscow court on suspicion of involvement in the Domodedovo Airport bombing in January in which 37 people died and dozens were injured. Umarov claimed responsibility for that bombing.

Izvestia reported that all three were thought to be associates of Umarov.

Turkey's Sabah newspaper said last week that police raided the hotel room of a suspected killer — an alleged Russian agent — in Istanbul, but that the man slipped away shortly before they arrived, leaving behind belongings, including night-vision equipment, a mask and a gun equipped with a silencer. The newspaper cited unidentified police intelligence officials, but police refused to comment on the report.

The paper claimed that the alleged agent also was in Istanbul in 2009, during a similar assassination of a Chechen there that may have been linked to a dispute between Chechen groups over the distribution of aid money, Turkish media quoted police as saying at the time.

In other attacks against Chechens, Sulim Yamadayev, a Chechen warlord, was shot dead in Dubai in March 2009, a few months after his older brother, a member of Russia's parliament, was gunned down during rush hour in central Moscow.

It is unclear who was behind that murder, although Dubai authorities initially pinned the killing on a figure close to Chechnya's Moscow-backed leader, Ramzan Kadyrov.

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