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Relatives of Dead to Sue Russian Railways Over Dangerous Crossing

By Roland Oliphant

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Bereaved relatives are preparing a class action suit against Russian Railways over dozens of deaths at a railway crossing in the Moscow region.

Up to 25 people a year die at the rail crossing at Saltykovskaya in the Balashikh district of the Moscow region each year, according to accusations leveled by bereaved relatives.

Sergei Sobolyev, a Kommersant FM journalist whose wife was killed at the railway crossing on Jan. 18, said Tuesday that he was preparing a lawsuit and public campaign with other bereaved relatives in a bid to force Russian Railways to finally build a safe crossing at the station.

Lena Sobolyeva's death was one of the latest of dozens recorded in the past three years at the crossing at Saltykovskaya, located a 25-minute train ride from Moscow's Kursky Station. Two more recent deaths happened on Dec. 23 and Jan. 25.

"I blame Russian Railways and the administration of Balashikh for the death of my wife and dozens of other people. All these deaths are on the hands of those people who brazenly talk about the safety and welfare of passengers. I blame those responsible for building those facilities and apparently looting the money allocated for it," Sobolyev wrote Tuesday on his Facebook page.

An investigation by Bolshoi Gorod magazine published Tuesday suggested that faulty traffic lights that do not take into account a third track for high-speed express trains is responsible for most of the deaths.

Local residents say that this is only a part of the whole picture, and that about three people die at the crossing each month, Bolshoi Gorod magazine reported.

Sobolyev used his Facebook post to appeal for funds and publicity to support the campaign and legal action against local authorities and the rail monopoly.

"I understand perfectly that I am picking a fight with windmills. But I'm not ready to just sit on my hands. My wife was 25. And every day I have to drive through the place where it happened," he wrote.

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