

Russian Mother's Murder Acquittal Is 'Unprecedented' Says Lawyer

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Yury Tutov / TASS

The acquittal of a mother for the murder of a violent partner has been described as unprecedented, according to a lawyer who defends victims of domestic abuse.

Russia adopted a law decriminalizing domestic violence in 2017, scrapping prison sentences for causing “minor harm” such as bruises and small abrasions. Family violence complaints have risen by 27 percent this last year in the wake of the new law, Moscow’s human rights ombudswoman said this week.

Related article: [Moscow Domestic Violence Appeals Skyrocket After Decriminalization Law](#)

A Moscow City Court [overturned](#) a district court’s ruling and released Yana Gurcheva in March. She was [sentenced](#) in November 2017 to six years in prison for fatally stabbing her partner in the chest during an altercation in which he strangled her in front of her children.

"Most often women are convicted for [self] defense, or they are found guilty for exceeding the limits of necessary defense," the Mediazona news website [quoted](#) women's rights lawyer Mari Davtyan as saying Monday. Gurcheva's "surprising" acquittal was the first instance in her memory in which a Russian court sided with the woman, Davtyan added.

The court's stance regarding such cases, Davtyan said, places the blame firmly with the woman: "She, a fool, is to blame. Why did she endure it for so long?" Mediazona reported.

Russia's investigative and prosecutorial bodies "always strictly control any acquittal and any positive decision in favor of the accused, and the courts most often don't risk rendering such decisions," Davtyan said.

Russian courts handed down one acquittal per 446 convictions last year, according to a Supreme Court judicial department [report](#) released Wednesday.

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