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Finnish Volleyball Team Accuses Russian Athletes of Sexual Harassment and Attempted Rape

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Finland's student sports association has accused a Russian university sports team of sexual harassment, including an attempted rape, at an international competition this month.

According to the association, Finnish female athletes faced repeated verbal and physical abuse from student athletes and a coach from the Russia team at the European Universities Games in Portugal. The Russia team has denied the claims.

The Finnish Student Sports Association alleged in a statement that the European University Sports Association (EUSA), which hosts the games, failed to protect its athletes from the assaults and an attempted rape. It said athletes from various countries witnessed the incidents, but that the organizers allegedly dismissed their statements.

"This can be described as silent acceptance of the events," the association said.

The Russian athletes, represented by the Dagestan State University men's volleyball squad, claimed that the incident was a miscommunication, according to the Mash Telegram channel. The athletes said that a Russian player had attempted to console a weeping Finnish woman on a bench after a party. When she fled the interaction, the Russian player allegedly ran after her and attempted to follow her to her room.

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EUSA reportedly demanded that the Finnish side provide evidence of the incident, noting that the Finnish players had consumed alcohol that night, YLE reported.

Elina Havu, the Secretary General of the Finnish students sport group, criticized the EUSA's demand for physical evidence, including bruises or DNA, as "completely ridiculous and out of date."

"The directors of EUSA truly must check their views especially on victim-blaming," Havu said, noting that several instances of harassment took place during the day when alcohol was not present.

Portuguese authorities promised to look into the incidents, Finland's YLE news website cited the organizers as saying Wednesday.

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