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Russia Will Charge Sisters Who Killed Abusive Father With Premeditated Murder

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Russia's Investigative Committee acknowledged that the sisters had been subjected to "physical and mental suffering" for a prolonged period while living with their father. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia will charge three teenage girls who killed their abusive father with premeditated murder, the country's Investigative Committee said Tuesday.

The decision follows a 16-month investigation and the three young women now face up to 20 years in jail.

Krestina, Angelina and Maria Khachaturyan killed their father Mikhail Khachaturyan in July 2018 after he subjected them to years of physical, mental and sexual abuse. Their high-profile case has sharply divided Russian society between those who say they were acting in self-defense and others who see them as murderers.

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The Investigative Committee said the sisters had been acting as a "group of persons by prior conspiracy" and had "an acute personal hostility" to their father when they killed him.

The committee sent prosecutors its recommendation for the sisters to be tried for premeditated murder committed by a group, a charge punishable by a prison sentence from eight to 20 years.

Sending indictments to prosecutors for approval is largely a formality.

The investigative body acknowledged that the sisters had been subjected to "physical and mental suffering" at the hands of their father for a prolonged period, adding that this was considered as a mitigating circumstance. It added that it recommends the youngest sister receive further psychiatric treatment.

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The sisters' lawyers maintain that they had been acting in self-defense and have called on prosecutors to be lenient.

Supporters of the sisters have staged pickets in Moscow and St. Petersburg this summer and fall, blaming Russia's legal system — which critics say turns a blind eye to domestic abuse — for forcing the teenagers to defend themselves. In recent months, their case has fueled calls to repeal a 2017 law that scrapped prison sentences for first-time abusers whose beatings resulted in "minor harm."

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