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Russia Recognizes Sisters Who Killed Abusive Father as Victims

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The Khachaturyan sisters' lawyers said they hope the development will lead to their murder charges being dropped. **Alexander AVilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian investigators have recognized three sisters accused of murdering their abusive father as victims in the criminal case against their father, lawyers said Tuesday, a move that activists called a "breakthrough" in their case.

Krestina, Angelina and Maria Khachaturyan admitted to killing their father in July 2018 after he subjected them to years of physical, mental and sexual abuse. The Investigative Committee opened a criminal case against their deceased father Mikhail Khachaturyan on charges of sexual assault, coercion into sexual acts and torture earlier this month.

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Alexei Parshin, one of the Khachaturyan sisters' lawyers, told The Moscow Times he hopes the development will lead to their charges being dropped.

If their father is found guilty, "this is more proof that they were assaulted repeatedly over several years and their lives and safety were endangered," Parshin said.

"The investigation already established that they sustained serious bodily harm; this points us to the state of necessary self-defense that they were in. If they were in a state of necessary self-defense, they can't be found guilty and the case against them should be dropped," he added.

Feminist activist Daria Serenko called the Investigative Committee decision a "very important breakthrough" for the sisters' case in a Tuesday tweet.

The sisters' other lawyer Yaroslav Pakulin told the Open Media news website that the sisters' trial won't start until their father's trial has ended, meaning they will likely remain under house arrest for months or even years.

Investigators previously refused lawyers' requests to downgrade the charges of premeditated murder, which carry a prison sentence of up to 20 years, to necessary defense charges.

The Khachaturyan sisters' case has sharply divided Russian society, with supporters blaming Russia's lack of protection for domestic abuse victims for forcing the teenagers to defend themselves and opponents viewing them as murderers.

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