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Drowned Nigerian Student's Russian Wife Says Faces Racist Online Attacks

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Richard Eluemunor drowned on a beach in Kaliningrad while saving a swimmer from drowning.
eluemunorn / Instagram

The Russian wife of a Nigerian student who drowned while rescuing a swimmer is facing racist online attacks driven by a notorious hate group leader.

Richard Eluemunor drowned on a city beach Saturday in Russia's western exclave of Kaliningrad, unable to break free from a current out of which he had pushed a drowning woman. He died at age 26, less than a year after getting married, according to his obituary on the Kaliningrad State Technical University's website.

His wife Natalia Eluemunor said she began receiving death threats after she posted a farewell message on Instagram, prompting nationalist, anti-women blogger Vladislav Pozdnyakov to mock her husband's death on social media.

"Pozdnyakov publishes my personal data and makes mocking photos with Richard," she told the Podyom news website Tuesday. "There are many angry and negative comments, threats

and gloating, but there's no point in contacting the police."

In comments to the independent Dozhd broadcaster, Eluemunor said Pozdnyakov's followers had threatened to kill, burn and drown her, but noted that her husband's "heroic act has no skin color."

"My main duty now is to see my husband off on his last journey. I won't tell you where and when because they promised to kill everyone who'll be there," Eluemunor told Podyom.

A Change.org petition signed by 1,300 people calls on the Russian government to issue a posthumous award of bravery to Eluemunor.

The racist attacks against Eluemunor by Pozdnyakov's followers comes a week after Dozhd anchor Anna Mongayt received similar death threats from his online community for interviewing a same-sex couple.

Pozdnyakov, who founded the "Male State" hate group on social media that boasted 150,000 members at its peak, was convicted of inciting hatred toward women and handed a suspended sentence in 2018. His sentence was overturned the following year.

The VKontakte social media platform blocked the "Male State" group last year.

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