

Family of Boston Marathon bombing witness killed by FBI denounces federal harassment

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Since the killing last May of Ibragim Todashev, a witness to the Boston Marathon bombings that occurred in April, family and friends of the deceased man have been subjected to threats, imprisonment and other forms of intimidation by federal officials.

On October 1, Tatiana Gruzdeva, the former live-in girlfriend of Todashev, was seized by federal agents and deported back to her native Moldova in eastern Europe. She had recently been granted a work visa with a year's extension, but she was taken from immigration offices by FBI officials during a standard meeting.

Gruzdeva, 20, had spent several months in detention in the immediate aftermath of Todashev's killing, having been detained on suspicion of an expired work visa on May 30 of this year. During that time, she had been repeatedly threatened and intimidated by FBI officials, including being subjected to several days of solitary confinement.

According to representatives from the Council of American-Islamic Relations, a civil rights group working closely with Todashev's father, Abdulbaki Todashev, on the case, Gruzdeva was deported on the pretext of an interview she had given to a Boston-based web magazine last month.

"They told her 'You have been talking to the reporters...and you have been saying that Ibragim was a good guy,' " said spokespeople from CAIR, in a transcript taken from Gruzdeva after she had been detained for the last time. CAIR officials also noted that Gruzdeva had been denied access to a lawyer while in custody.

The deportation comes in the immediate aftermath of the deportation of another close acquaintance of the Boston Marathon bombing witness last month. In late September, Ashurmamad Miraliev, 23, was detained by local authorities in Osceola County, Florida, on

suspicion that the latter had made attempts to intimidate a witness in an unrelated battery case from last year, also involving Todashev.

Though spokesmen from the county sheriff's office have stated that the two cases were not connected, Allen Moore, the public information officer of Osceola County Corrections, said that Miraliev had been jointly detained by both the county and a federal agency, which he declined to identify. Miraliev, too, was denied an attorney.

"There's been a pattern and practice right now of the FBI intimidating and bringing perpetual charges and harassing many, many individuals who are associated with Ibragim," said Hassan Shilby of CAIR to reporters. "They're trying to teach her that if you speak out about injustice, they will make your life a living hell," he stated.

"People who had anything to do with [Ibragim] are being put behind bars. I don't know why. It's supposed to be America, it's supposed to be a democracy," Abdulbaki Todashev, the father of the slain witness, told reporters from the *Guardian*. The elder Todashev noted that an independent investigation, slated to be conducted by Florida state attorney Jeff Ashton last August, when Todashev visited the region, had not yet taken place. "They promised it would be an honest and just investigation, but so far there has been no information at all," he said.

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The thuggish attempts to intimidate associates of the younger Todashev are of a piece with the behavior of federal officials nominally put in charge of the investigation of events surrounding the bombing of the Boston Marathon last April.

Todashev was shot multiple times and killed in his

home while being questioned about his ties to Boston Marathon bombing suspect Tamerlan Tsarnaev. To this day, no official accounting of the exact circumstances leading to his death have been produced by officials. It was initially claimed that Todashev had suddenly “flipped out” and attacked officials with what was first described as a “sword” or a “knife,” or even a “broomstick.” Later, the authorities acknowledged that the witness may have been unarmed.

In connection with this, all information pertaining to Todashev’s autopsy report and medical records has been sealed and denied a public release. Similarly, independent investigations into the events by local Florida agencies have been stonewalled.

In June, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the younger suspect in the Boston Marathon bombings, was arraigned in a Massachusetts court on 45 charges for his potential role in the April events that killed three and wounded several hundred others. Seventeen of the charges carry the possibility of a death penalty. Attorneys for the suspect have often complained of being stonewalled by the prosecution in obtaining evidence that might help to reduce the charges against Tsarnaev. Later this month, the prosecution will announce whether it intends to proceed with the death penalty.



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