

## ‘Black Widows’ linked to Moscow blast

News reports link Chechen 'Black Widows' to Monday's deadly suicide bombing on the Moscow subway.

By: [Cathal Kelly](#) Columnist, Published on Mon Mar 29 2010

For the first time in nearly six years, Chechnya's *Shahidka* – or Black Widows – have been linked to a terror attack inside Russia.

On Monday, Russian authorities say a pair of women ignited suicide bombs inside the Russian subway. Nine hours after the morning rush-hour attacks, [37 people were listed as killed](#) in two separate attacks.

News reports have linked the women to embattled northern Caucasus and the *Shahidka* movement that first sprouted there in 2000. The term is a feminine derivation of *shahid*, the Arabic word for “witness,” or “martyr.”

The black widows are reportedly Chechen women who have lost husbands and brothers in the fight against Russian military forces. They are generally young, often teenagers. They wear mourning clothes – dressing in black from head to toe.

The conflict in Chechnya erupted into war in 1994, and has simmered every since. The conflict has also spread into the neighbouring countries of Dagestan and Ingushetia.

After several years of brutal losses, Chechen fighters began recruiting women to carry out suicide attacks about 10 years ago.

Since then, the black widows have attacked army bases, rock concerts, hotels and buses. A 2003 attack on a commuter train killed 46 people.

The black widows were present at the 2004 Beslan school massacre (it was later reported that their bomb belts were prematurely detonated after they objected to killing children). In 2002, nearly half of those who participated in the siege on a Moscow theatre were women. They were led by the widow of a famed Chechen warlord.

In 2004, during the last terror siege on the Russian capital, nearly all suicide bombers were black widows.

Since then, they have come to fascinate and terrify the Russian population. Monday's bombing will revive all of those fears.