

DIALLOS SEEK FED HELP JUSTICE DEPT. TO MEET WITH PARENTS, SHARPTON

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The Justice Department has agreed to meet with the parents of slain African immigrant Amadou Diallo to hear their grievances about the murder trial being moved to Albany from the Bronx.

Kadiatou and Saikou Diallo will travel with the Rev. Al Sharpton to Washington on Jan. 24 to meet with Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder and Bill Lann Lee of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

"We want to talk to them about the fairness of the trial being moved to Albany," Sharpton told the Sunday Daily News.

Christine DiBartolo, a Justice Department spokeswoman, confirmed the meeting had been scheduled.

An appellate court last month ruled that the trial of the four cops who fired 41 bullets at the unarmed street vendor should be moved out of the Bronx.

The judges decided that intense media coverage and local anti-cop sentiment made it impossible for the officers to get a fair trial in the Bronx.

The Diallos, Sharpton and others took to the streets in protest, saying Diallo's killers should be tried in the borough where he lived and was shot.

They criticized the transfer of the case from a predominantly minority community and black judge into the hands of a mainly white community and white judge.

And they called on the Justice Department to intervene.

Federal officials in New York have been guarded in their response, saying only that they would continue to monitor the case.

Sharpton has called the venue change the so-called Simi Valley strategy, a reference to California's Rodney King beating case, in which the cops were acquitted after their trial was moved out of Los Angeles and into the suburbs.

In that case, however, the authorities later intervened, and two of the officers were convicted of federal civil rights charges.

DiBartolo would not comment on what action - if any - might arise from the meeting.

Omar Mohommedi, Saikou Diallo's attorney, said that, at the very least, the family wanted reassurance that the Justice Department was monitoring the case.

"We are just looking for support from the feds," Mohammedi said. "We are looking for justice."

Kadiatou Diallo could not be reached for comment.

Jury selection is scheduled to begin in Albany Supreme Court on Jan. 31.