

Moscow remembers Stalin's atrocities — and Putin hates it

By Post Editorial Board

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Every year they come out by the thousands to the Solovetsky Stone in Moscow's Lubyanka Square, in the shadow of the old KGB headquarters, to read the names of Josef Stalin's victims. And they did it again last week, despite the Putin regime's effort to force the ceremony to move.

Nikolai Afanasiev. Filipp Bezikov. Boris Troitsky. Vladislav Yankovskiy. All among the 40,000 Moscovites killed in Stalin's Great Terror.

They read the victims' ages and professions and the dates of their executions — fleshing out the loss.

One woman added a victim of a more recent terror: "Boris Nemtsov: physicist, politician, statesman. Shot to death on Feb. 27, 2015, near the Kremlin." The murder of this harsh Vladimir Putin critic, a former deputy prime minister working to expose and protest regime crimes, officially remains unsolved.

Others demanded freedom for political prisoners: historian Yuriy Dmitriyev, human-rights worker Oyub Titiyev, filmmaker Oleh Sentsov.

But the core "Returning the Names" ceremony is about the past, refusing to forget the state's murder of more than 1 million Russians in 1937-38. The human-rights

group Memorial has led the event since 2006, at the stone memorializing Stalin's gulag labor camps, where 2 million or more of 18 million prisoners died from the 1930s through the 1950s.

"It's important that he knows what happened," said a woman who brought her 10-year-old. "We have relatives who were killed during the repressions, and we have relatives who helped carry them out. I want him to know the full history."

Putin, a big Stalin fan, doesn't like that. Only a public outcry stopped his minions from forcing the ceremony to move across town, to the "Wall of Grief" that Putin erected in 2015.

"At the new memorial," one woman [told the Moscow Times](#), "there is engraved text asking us to forgive the repressions. We must always remember what happened, not forgive."

Putin's rule is less bloody than Stalin's, but just as unforgivable.