The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ombudsman Wants Katyn Classified as Political Purge

By Alexandra Odynova

May 22, 2011



Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin has called for the government to acknowledge that 22,000 Poles executed in Katyn forest and elsewhere by Josef Stalin's henchmen in 1940 were victims of political purges — if relatives don't sue.

"We've got to put an end to it through complete transparency and the refusal of material claims," Lukin said Friday, Interfax reported.

He said Russia must declassify and hand over to Poland all documents concerning the killings, which have strained Russian-Polish relations for decades.

"We must publish all the data we have once and for all," he said.

Thousands of members of the Polish military and elite were executed in the Katyn forest after the Soviet Union invaded Poland in World War II. Moscow blamed the executions on Nazi

Germany, which took over the area in 1941, but the State Duma acknowledged last year that the killings were done by the Soviet secret service NKVD on Stalin's order.

Nevertheless, Russia has not formally recognized the slaughter as political repression. The Military Prosecutor General's Office closed an inquiry in 2004 and classified its reasons for doing so.

Many Soviet documents on the issue also remain secret, although Moscow began to declassify them following a political thaw prompted by the Katyn tragedy last year when Polish President Lech Kaczynski died in a plane crash en route to the forest.

In all, 148 of 183 volumes on the Katyn killings have been handed over to Poland, Prosecutor General Yury Chaika said Thursday, without elaborating why the rest remain under wraps and whether they might eventually be released.

Lukin said Friday that the documents might remain classified for fear that publication would have a negative impact on the lives of relatives of the NKVD officers. But he called for disclosure nevertheless.

"Otherwise, we shouldn't publish anything at all — no materials on fascism, nothing on anyone else," he said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/05/22/ombudsman-wants-katyn-classified-as-political-purge-a7106