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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Victims of Soviet Repressions Remembered

By The Moscow Times

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An event in St. Petersburg commemorates victims of political repression. **Alexander Demianchuk**

Events were held around the country Wednesday to commemorate the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions, which is devoted to those affected by political persecution in the Soviet Union.

Hundreds of people held a rally in central St. Petersburg near the Solovetsky Stone, a monument to victims of political repressions, RIA Novosti reported.

In Moscow, people read aloud the names of victims of repressions at the Butovo firing range in the Moscow region, where over 20,000 political prisoners were shot and buried during the Great Terror, Dozhd television reported.

Similar events were held Wednesday in Murmansk, Tyumen, Izhevsk, Penza, Kazan, Ufa and other cities.

In connection with the day, the human rights group Memorial also released a list of 70 people it believes to be political prisoners currently held in Russian jails.

The Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions has been commemorated ever since convicts of penal colonies in the republic of Mordovia and the Perm region held a hunger strike on Oct. 30, 1974, in honor of the victims of repressions. Dissidents then held hunger strikes and demonstrations every year on that date, and the event received official sanction after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991.

The number of people sentenced to death for political reasons in the Soviet Union, mostly under Joseph Stalin, is estimated at between 640,000 and 1 million, and millions also died as a result of extrajudicial punishment, torture, living conditions at Gulag camps and places of exile and during the Holodomor famine. According to some estimates, the total number of those who either died or suffered as a result of persecution amounted to tens of millions.

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