

# Amid Acts of Vandalism, Activists Appeal for Permanent Nemtsov Memorial

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March 29, 2015



Last week, activists associated with the fringe nationalist organization SERB vandalized the memorial, which has become a place of pilgrimage for many ordinary Russians in recent weeks.

As opposition activists scramble to fix defilements to a makeshift memorial to Boris Nemtsov, city authorities are being urged to install a permanent memorial on the spot where the opposition leader was gunned down near the Kremlin last month, Interfax reported Sunday.

Last week, activists associated with the fringe nationalist organization SERB vandalized the memorial, which has become a place of pilgrimage for many ordinary Russians in recent weeks. The activists left notes denouncing Nemtsov as a traitor and destroyed some of the tributes that had been left on the site by Nemtsov supporters.

Meanwhile, on Saturday morning, individuals in street clothes scrubbed clean the sidewalk

of the bridge where Nemtsov was killed, removing all flowers, photographs, posters and candles that had been placed there in his honor, Interfax reported.

A representative of the Moscow government who is responsible for cleaning the neighborhood told Interfax on Sunday that city cleaners only removed dead flowers.

"The cleaners are instructed to keep the spot tidy and orderly. To this extent, they only removed dead flowers and the flowers that were placed beyond the memorial spot," said Igor Pergamenshchik, spokesman for Moscow's deputy mayor for housing, utilities and amenities.

Opposition activists decried both SERB's defilements and the Saturday morning clean-up as provocations, and rushed to restore the memorial both times. They have also turned to the Prosecutor General's Office and the Investigative Committee with requests to investigate the earlier acts of vandalism.

Many Muscovites brought new flowers and pictures to the bridge over the weekend. Volunteers organized a flower delivery effort for those who could not come in person. More than 100 bouquets were delivered on Saturday night, Maxim Kats, municipal legislator in Moscow's Shchukino district administration wrote in a blog post. He noted that more were expected to arrive on Sunday.

"I am confident that the people's memorial will exist on the bridge for a long time; such provocations only mobilize people and they continue to bring flowers," Nemtsov's ally Ilya Yashin told Interfax on Saturday.

Yashin said that volunteers are currently collecting signatures to support an official request to install a memorial plaque or stone on the bridge.

"Forty days after Nemtsov's death, the signatures will be delivered to government officials together with an official request," Yashin said.

According to the current legislation, a memorial plaque can be installed in Moscow only after two years have passed since the death of the person, and after a special commission has approved the initiative.

Nemtsov, one of the leaders of the Russian opposition, was murdered in front of the Kremlin in late February. Five people have been arrested over the murder case, with two of them charged. All of the suspects are natives of Russia's restive republic of Chechnya.

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<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/29/amid-acts-of-vandalism-activists-appeal-for-permanent-nemtsov-memorial-a45244>