

Moscow Approves Monument to Journalists Killed on the Job

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Russia ranks among the top 10 countries where the murder of journalists most often remains unpunished.

The Moscow City Duma has moved to honor fallen journalists by approving the erection in the city center of a monument to those who lost their lives while performing their professional duties, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

"There is already a monument dedicated to the journalists who perished during World War II. Now we are referring to a monument to journalists who died relatively recently — in Afghanistan and Chechnya and Ukraine," Yevgeny Gerasimov, head of the Moscow City Duma's commission on culture and mass communication, said in comments carried by Interfax.

Gerasimov also made reference to the deaths of several high-profile media professionals that have strongly resonated with the public both in Russia and abroad, including Vladislav

Listyev, Artyom Borovik and Anna Politkovskaya.

Listyev was a popular journalist and television anchor who championed democracy in the early post-Soviet period. He was gunned down on the steps to his apartment building on March 1, 1995, at the age of 38.

Borovik was a prominent investigative journalist who died in an airplane crash in March 2000, at the age of 39.

Politkovskaya was the victim of a contract killing. An opposition-minded investigative journalist who reported extensively on Chechnya, Politkovskaya was shot dead in the elevator of her Moscow apartment building in 2006, aged 48.

The Moscow Union of Journalists began collecting funds for the construction of the monument in March. The project will be fully bankrolled by the union, Interfax reported.

The monument — the design of which has not yet been made public — will be erected next to the Central House of Journalists, near Arbatskaya Ploshchad.

According to U.S. advocacy group the Committee to Protect Journalists, 56 journalists have been killed in Russia since 1992. The top three beats held by slain journalists were war, politics and corruption.

The 2015 World Press Freedom Index — an annual ranking compiled by international advocacy group Reporters Without Borders — pegged Russia at 152 out of 180 countries, noting that "The climate [in Russia's media sphere] has become very oppressive for those [journalists] who question the new patriotic and neo-conservative discourse." In that ranking, Russia trails directly behind the Democratic Republic of Congo (150) and Gambia (151). In 2002, the earliest year for which data is provided by the World Press Freedom Index, Russia held the ranking of 121.

Russia ranks among the top 10 countries where the murder of journalists most often remains unpunished, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists' 2014 Global Impunity Index.

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