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Support for Death Penalty in Russia Plummets

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The number of Russians who support the death penalty has plummeted by 24 percent over the past 15 years.

Just 44 percent of Russians would like to see the return of the death penalty, compared in 68 percent in 2002, a survey by independent pollster the Levada Center revealed on Wednesday.

Thirty-two percent of respondents said they would like to see Russia return to implementing capital punishment in a similar way as it had been used by in the 1990s, primarily for murder. That figure fell from 49 percent in 2002. Twelve percent said that use of the death penalty should be expanded, down from 19 percent in 2002.

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The death penalty remains enshrined in Russian law, but the Kremlin placed a moratorium on its use in 1996. The move was a condition of Russia's ascension to the Council of Europe.

One in four Russians now support the Kremlin's moratorium, compared to just 12 percent in 2002.

The number of respondents who want to see capital punishment abolished has also grown, from 12 percent to 16 percent.

Belarus is the only country in Europe to maintain the death penalty, which is carried out by firing squad. Three men were executed in the country in 2016.

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