

Russia to Investigate If Last Tsar Was Shot in 'Ritual Killing'

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Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS

Members of a church commission investigating the 1918 shooting of Tsar Nicholas II and his family claim that the last tsar of Russia was murdered in a ritual killing.

Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia, was put under house arrest after renouncing the throne in 1917. He was shot together with his wife and five children on July 17, 1918, in the cellar of a merchant's house in Yekaterinburg.

Russian investigators reopened the probe into the century-old murder in 2015, even though the Bolsheviks believed to have shot the Romanov family were no longer living.

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At a conference on the topic this week, a Russian Orthodox bishop widely rumored to be

President Vladimir Putin's spiritual advisor [suggested](#) that the shooting of the tsar and his family was a ritual killing.

The theory is supported by many members of the church commission examining the evidence behind the murder, Father Tikhon Shevkunov was cited by the state-run TASS news agency as saying Monday.

Marina Molodtsova, a senior investigator at Russia's Investigative Committee, [told](#) the conference Monday that 34 forensic examinations had been commissioned in the past two decades to identify the remains found near Yekaterinburg.

"A psychological and historical evaluation will be carried out to see if it could have been a ritual killing," Molodtsova said.

The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia called the suggestions a "shocking expression of an antisemitic myth" in a statement Monday.

"We all think of this as absolutely unacceptable," the federation's spokesperson, Boruch Gorin, [told](#) the Interfax news agency, adding the group was "shocked first and foremost by the sheer absurdity of the allegations."

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