

Russian Ministry: Gulag Prison Records Digitized, Not Destroyed

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Russia's Interior Ministry has [denied](#) reports that records of Soviet-era gulag labor camp survivors are being destroyed, saying instead that the files are being digitized.

The Gulag Museum in Moscow [alleged](#) last week that cards with the personal information of former inmates and their release dates were being permanently destroyed under secret inter-agency orders. A senior Interior Ministry official [denied](#) the existence of the 2014 decree that the museum alleges mandated the destruction of paper records once an ex-inmate turned 80 years old.

Related article: [Russia Secretly Orders Destruction of Gulag Prisoners' Records, Media Warns](#)

"The alphabetic cards removed from paper files after their storage period expires are mandatorily converted to a digital format, ensuring their permanent storage," the ministry

said in a statement to the Meduza news website Wednesday.

Paper records are only kept when the gulag prisoners were sentenced for crimes against the state, or when the so-called “registration cards” hold academic or historical value, the ministry said.

Reports that gulag prisoners’ records were being destroyed sparked fears that authorities were attempting to erase the history of Soviet political repression.

“We are seriously alarmed because this would have destroyed a unique source about the fate of the convicts,” Yelena Zhemkova, acting head of the human rights group Memorial, [told](#) the RBC business portal.

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