

Catholic Church in Russia Condemns Memorial Removal

By [AFP](#)

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Commemorative plaque to Lithuanian archbishop Mėcislovas Rejnys **AleksandrMurin** (CC BY 4.0)

The Russian branch of the Catholic Church on Wednesday called for the restoration of a dismantled memorial to an archbishop who was a victim of Stalin-era repression.

Authorities in central Russia's Vladimir region recently took down a prison wall that featured a commemoration of Lithuanian archbishop Mėcislovas Rejnys and other foreigners who were imprisoned as part of Josef Stalin's Great Terror.

Rejnys died in prison in 1953 after being arrested by Stalin's secret police six years earlier.

The Catholic Church recognizes Rejnys, who briefly served as Lithuania's foreign minister in the 1920s, as a martyr.

"He was a true Christian and pastor. He proved his loyalty to Christ in prison, where he was

held on unjust charges," Kirill Gorbunov, vicar general of the Catholic Church's Moscow Archdiocese, told the RIA Novosti news agency.

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"Such a person, of course, deserves to have their memory immortalized at the place of their martyrdom," he added.

Authorities said the memorial wall was removed because it was unsafe, Russian media reported.

Several other monuments to victims of Soviet-era repression across the country have disappeared since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine last year and has carried out a sweeping crackdown on dissent.

Lithuanian and Polish officials have also called for the monument in Vladimir — which included dedications to prominent Polish and Ukrainian victims — to be restored.

"It was not the first time that monuments honoring the victims of the Stalinist totalitarian regime were being demolished in Russia," Lithuania's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

"It can only be seen as acts of contempt for the historical truth and the memory of the victims," it said.

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