

# Memorial to ‘Victims of Finnish Occupation’ Installed at Stalin-Era Mass Grave – Opposition Deputy

December 25, 2023



**Emilia Slabunova / Telegram**

Authorities in northwestern Russia’s republic of Karelia have erected a monument to “victims of Finnish occupation” at a memorial site for the victims of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin’s purges, a local opposition deputy [said](#) Monday.

The Sandarmokh memorial, where at least 6,000 gulag prisoners were buried in mass graves, is officially designated as a “burial place of victims of political repressions,” said Emilia Slabunova, a member of Karelia’s legislative assembly.

“Changing it is against the law,” Slabunova wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

Activists have previously [accused](#) authorities of trying to cover up evidence of Stalin-era repressions by carrying out archaeological digs in search of the remains of Soviet soldiers killed when the region was occupied by [Nazi-aligned](#) Finland during World War II.

**Embed:**

Last Tuesday, Slabunova [said](#) she had alerted regional prosecutors about plans to install a monument at Sandarmokh with the inscription that reads:

“To the victims of the repressions of 1937-1939 and the victims of Finnish occupation during the Great Patriotic War [World War II].”

On Monday, Slabunova shared photographs of a black stone slab with the inscription under a tarp cover at Sandarmokh.

“The meaning of the burial place has changed because the memorial to the victims of the [Finnish] occupation was placed in a location whose relation to [these victims] has not been proven by anyone,” the deputy claimed.

Slabunova said she now plans to write another letter to Karelia’s prosecutors asking for an inspection into “the violation of moral norms and the disrespect toward victims of repressions.”

Since its discovery in 1997, Sandarmokh has [hosted](#) pilgrims and European delegations for a memorial service on the Day of Remembrance every Aug. 5.

Yury Dmitriev, a historian who played a key role in uncovering the mass graves at Sandarmokh, is serving a 15-year prison term on charges of sexually abusing his adopted daughter.

His supporters link Dmitriev’s prison sentence to his work uncovering Soviet-era atrocities at a time when Russia was restoring Stalin’s image despite the atrocities carried out under his rule.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/12/25/memorial-to-victims-of-finnish-occupation-installed-at-stalin-era-mass-grave-opposition-deputy-a83562>