The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
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Kremlin 'Has Nothing to Say' About Large Crowds at Navalny Gravesite

March 04, 2024

Mourners at Alexei Navalny's funeral on Friday. **Prikly (CC BY 4.0)**

The Kremlin said Monday it "has nothing" to say about the large crowds of mourners who have visited Alexei Navalny's grave since he was buried in Moscow late last week.

"We haven't talked much about this topic and we believe that we have nothing more to say," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters when asked whether the authorities believe the large crowds indicate that the late activist had "significant support."

As of Saturday, at least 23,000 people visited the cemetery where Navalny was buried, the independent broadcaster Dozhd reported, citing a source in the Moscow government.

The independent media project White Counter (Belyy Schetchik), which measures crowd sizes at protests, estimated that at least 16,500 people attended Navalny's funeral ceremony on Friday, adding that the real number is likely larger.

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Ahead of Friday's funeral, Peskov warned that any unauthorized demonstrations in Navalny's support would be considered a violation of the law and that participants would be held accountable.

Following Navalny's death, the Kremlin held a series of meetings with senior FSB and Interior Ministry generals to plan how to prevent the funeral from capturing the public's attention, two high-ranking sources in the Russian government who spoke on condition of anonymity told The Moscow Times.

"The Kremlin does not want a picture similar to the rally at [Soviet dissident Andrei] Sakharov's funeral. Therefore, the special services are working according to their plan," a Russian official who formerly worked for a security agency said.

State media was also ordered to ignore the funeral, a source close to the Kremlin and the manager of a major Russian media outlet said.

Navalny died on Feb. 16 at the Arctic penal colony where he was serving a 19-year sentence on "extremism" charges largely seen as political retribution for his opposition to the Kremlin.

His family and allies have blamed his death on the Kremlin and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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