

Putin Allies Demand Return of Death Penalty After Moscow Attack

By [AFP](#)

March 24, 2024



A woman lights candles at a makeshift memorial in front of the Crocus City Hall. **Stringer/AFP**

Senior members of Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime have called for the country to bring back the death penalty following Friday's attack on a Moscow concert hall.

Critics have sounded the alarm over the demand, including due to Russia's broad use of counter-terrorism and anti-extremist laws to target Kremlin opponents and supporters of Ukraine.

Russia has had a moratorium on capital punishment since the 1990s but calls are growing in the Putin camp to lift it in the wake of the deadliest attack in the country for two decades.

"Now a lot of questions are being asked about the death penalty," Vladimir Vasilyev, head of the ruling United Russia party in the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, said on Saturday.

"This topic will definitely be deeply, professionally and substantively worked out. A decision will be made that will meet the mood and expectations of our society," Vasilyev said in a video statement.

More than 130 people were killed when gunmen stormed the Crocus City Hall concert hall on Friday, shooting spectators before setting the building on fire.

"It is necessary to bring back the death penalty when it comes to terrorism and murder," Yury Afonin, deputy head of the State Duma's security committee, said on Saturday.

Former President Dmitry Medvedev, now deputy head of the Security Council, and Duma speaker Vyacheslav Volodin – two close allies of Putin – also called for the "terrorists" to be "destroyed" following the attack.

"Terrorists only understand retaliatory terror...death for death," Medvedev said on Friday in a post on Telegram.

The move was also backed by the heads of two other pro-Putin parties in Russia's parliament.

Critics have voiced alarm over the plans, including because of Russia's broad use of counter-terrorism and anti-extremist laws, which have been used to target Kremlin opponents and supporters of Ukraine.

Authorities opened a record 143 terror-related criminal cases in 2023, according to the independent Mediazona news site – up from fewer than 20 a year before 2018.

Earlier this month, Russia's financial monitoring watchdog added the "international LGBT movement" to its "terrorists and extremists" blacklist.

Alexei Navalny, Putin's most strident critic of the last decade, who died in an Arctic prison colony last month, was among those serving years in prison on "extremism" charges.

"If we allow the death penalty for terrorism, do you realize how many people the system would kill?", women's rights campaigner Alyona Popova said Saturday on Telegram.

"How many people are in prison right now...who are not terrorists in any way?" she added.

"In no way should we play on tragedy."

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/03/24/putin-allies-demand-return-of-death-penalty-after-moscow-attack-a84603>