The Moscow Times
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Russia Scraps WWII March Over Security Fears

By AFP

April 23, 2024



The Immortal Regiment march in Moscow. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Russia is canceling a popular procession to commemorate World War II victims for a second straight year due to growing security concerns, officials announced Tuesday.

For more than a decade, Russians across the country have paraded through cities each May 9 holding portraits of relatives who were killed in what Russia calls the "Great Patriotic War."

Under Vladimir Putin, the nationwide Immortal Regiment march is among the patriotic events promoted by the Kremlin.

"In connection with existing threats to public security, the central headquarters of the Immortal Regiment has decided not to hold the 2024 march in an in-person format," Yelena Tsunaeya, a ruling United Russia parliamentarian and organizer, said.

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The decision comes after an uptick in Ukrainian drone and missile attacks, mainly in regions on the countries' shared border.

But it also came several weeks after a deadly attack claimed by Islamic State-linked militants killed at least 144 people at a concert venue and shopping center just outside Moscow.

Born out of a grassroots movement, the Immortal Regiment was first held in the Siberian city of Tomsk in 2012 but has since been adopted by authorities and become an all-Russia event.

Putin has participated in the march before, holding a portrait of his father.

Ukraine has warned that Russian forces will try to capture the important town of Chasiv Yar in east Ukraine before May 9, when Russia marks the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany.

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