

Putin Visits Beslan Ahead of School Siege's 20th Anniversary

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President Vladimir Putin at school No.1 in Beslan. kremlin.ru

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday [visited](#) the North Caucasus city of Beslan ahead of the 20th anniversary of the Beslan school siege, the deadliest terror attack in modern Russian history.

On Sept. 1, 2004, armed militants from Chechnya took more than 1,100 people hostage at Beslan School No. 1 in the republic of North Ossetia, holding them captive until Russian troops stormed the school building two days later. By the end of the storming, 334 hostages including 186 children had been killed, as well as 31 militants.

A video released by the Kremlin [showed](#) Putin laying flowers, kneeling and crossing himself at the City of Angels memorial cemetery in honor of the victims.

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Putin was then [shown](#) laying flowers at the monument dedicated to the Federal Security Service (FSB) special forces fighters who stormed School No. 1.

A video published by the state-run TASS news agency [showed](#) a helicopter hovering in the distance as Putin arrived at the empty memorial cemetery.

He also [toured](#) the school for the first time since the massacre, according to TASS. He was [seen](#) laying flowers and lighting a candle on school grounds, which the Kremlin [said](#) was converted into an “international cultural and patriotic center for the prevention of terrorism.”

Later during his visit, Putin [met with](#) several mothers of those who died in the Beslan attack.

“Attempts were made abroad to not only justify the terror attack in Beslan but also to provide all sorts of help to the terrorists,” the Kremlin leader said without naming any countries or entities specifically.

“These people have no morals or principles, they have only their interests,” he added, sitting opposite three women from the Mothers of Beslan group. “Russia defeated terrorists in the Caucasus, and it will defeat neo-Nazis committing crimes in the Donbas and Kursk region.”

At the meeting with Putin, the Mothers of Beslan complained that Russia's investigation into the school siege has never been completed, the group's co-chairwoman Aneta Gadiyeva told the independent Agentstvo outlet.

This part of the meeting, unlike Putin's remarks about Ukraine, was not televised.

Gadiyeva said Putin told the women that he had not known this and would ask the head of the Investigative Committee to intervene.

In 2017, in response to a joint complaint from 89 families of Beslan victims, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Russian government did not act on evidence of a likely attack; used “indiscriminate force” that contributed to the casualties among the hostages; and made other failures to protect the lives of Russian citizens.

The court ordered Russia to pay almost 3 million euros in damages.

AFP contributed reporting.

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