

Moscow's Gulag History Museum Shuttters Over Fire Safety Violations

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Moscow's Gulag History Museum [announced](#) its temporary closure on Thursday, citing fire safety violations amid what critics say is a broader attempt by the Russian authorities to downplay Soviet-era repression.

The museum said that the safety violations, flagged by the city's construction inspection center, "pose a threat to the safety and comfort of visitors" and must be addressed before reopening.

While no timeline was given, the museum promised to refund all tickets. Authorities have not commented on the closure.

First established in 2001, the Gulag History Museum tells visitors the story of the Soviet Union's vast network of forced labor camps, as well as their legacy in modern Russia, with artifacts gathered from all over the country.

The announcement of the museum's temporary closure comes two weeks after it [hosted](#) a commemoration for the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions — a public event that the Moscow Mayor's Office has denied permits for since 2020.

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Outside the museum on Thursday, a man, who asked to be identified only by his first name Mikhail, expressed concern about a possible long-term closure of the famed institution.

"It's a strong museum, very impressive. It's disappointing that this happened. It's a loss, a great loss if, God forbid, it's permanent," he told AFP. "We need people to see it, to understand, to know that it must not be repeated."

However, Yulia, a musician in her 50s who also declined to give her last name, said she welcomed the closure.

"I'm against such establishments. I'm not sad," she told AFP while walking her dog in a nearby park. "I'm a Stalinist... people die in every era, right now as well. We can't make monuments for every era."

Russian authorities have cited fire safety issues in [past closures](#) of cultural institutions, including the Documentary Film Center in 2022 and the European University of St. Petersburg in 2008.

In September, Russia's top prosecutor [ordered](#) a review of decisions that rehabilitated victims of Soviet repression. Shortly after, the legal status of 4,000 rehabilitated individuals was [revoked](#), reclassifying them as "traitors of the Motherland."

AFP contributed reporting.

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