

# One Year After His Death, Allies and Supporters Remember Navalny in Berlin Memorial

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February 17, 2025



Navalny supporters at the memorial service at Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin. **Leonid Volkov / X**

BERLIN — Hundreds of supporters and allies of late opposition leader Alexei Navalny gathered in a Berlin church for a memorial service marking the first anniversary of his death.

“It was very important that today we both laughed and felt sad,” one attendee, who declined to share their name, told The Moscow Times. “Very often politicians see politics and forget about the human side. And today we had an opportunity to remember the human side.”

In a wide-ranging 90-minute conversation, Navalny’s widow Yulia shared memories of her husband, discussed life without him and called on Russians abroad to protest the regime “for those in Russia who can’t.”

“We have to come out [to protest] for those people in Russia who can't,” Navalnaya said, encouraging attendees to join the planned March 1 demonstration in Berlin against the war in Ukraine.

Navalnaya, who vowed to continue her husband’s work after his death, also called on supporters to do everything possible to bring the end of Vladimir Putin’s regime closer.

“Some do more, some do less,” she said. “Not everyone can be heroes.”

“I want us to live in a normal, democratic country,” she said.

After the service, supporters stayed to talk to Navalnaya and her allies and have them sign copies of Navalny’s memoir “Patriot.”

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Among those in attendance were Navalny’s chief investigator and Anti-Corruption Foundation chair Maria Pevchikh, former chief of staff Leonid Volkov, press secretary Kira Yarmysh and allied politician Ilya Yashin.

Masha, a Russian woman living in Berlin since the invasion of Ukraine, said she came to the service “to be among like-minded people.”

“I think he’s probably one of the bravest people in my country, at least. And for me, it is a personal tragedy that I still feel deeply,” she said. “At the same time, [he is] a personal example to me, my personal reference point, how to act, how to behave, he also inspires me to activism, and I just wanted to be among like-minded people.”

That sentiment was shared by many attendees, who expressed their desire to feel a sense of unity.

One person described Navalny as “a complete stranger to whom I am not a relative, not a friend, not a son, no one, and at the same time [he is] someone close [to me].”

Another attendee, Jana, described Navalny as a “symbol of hope.”

“After his death, it felt like there was no hope anymore. Today, I listened to Yulia, and she talked about [hope], about how we need to believe, and maybe I will have hope again,” she said.

One couple who described themselves as Germans who had not lived in Russia “for a long time” said they felt it was important to bring their son to the service.

“We came to show someone with Russian roots, who has never lived in Russia, what people are like in Russia. He was born here, yes. [We came] to see people who make history, who want to make the world a better, freer place,” said the man, who declined to give his name.

Despite the feeling of unity inside the church, many people expressed worries about the future of the exiled Russian opposition.

“I see a lot of fragmentation, a lot of conflicts and misunderstandings,” Masha said. “I think it's a projection of anger, because their anger can't reach its target, and the target is Vladimir Putin. People just project it on each other, and the Russian opposition shows this very clearly.”

Alexander, who also moved abroad after the war started, said he feared for the Russian opposition.

“I studied history, and I have to draw parallels. It seems to me that, well, unfortunately, it's just going to dissolve. But I don't want to sort of take a pessimistic view like that, it's just a consequence of the fact that we've been living in other countries now for two years,” he said.

Asked what Russians and the Russian opposition abroad could do, Ivan asked people to support Russians inside Russia, and to remember that “even today in Russia, people go out [to protest] in memory of Alexei Navalny.”

Ilya, an attendee who admitted he wasn't Navalny's biggest supporter when he was alive, but who said he had great respect for him, told The Moscow Times he thought Russians needed to support “grassroots initiatives” like those that aid LGBTQ+ people or the environment.

“There are a lot of people in Russia who help the needy and the weak. But at the same time, they do not ask themselves why they have to do it, and why the state does not support them but prevents them from doing it,” he said. “It seems to me that through such mini-communities it is possible to promote self-consciousness and in general political ideas about regime change.”

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