

One Year On, Hundreds Pay Tribute After Deadly Crocus City Hall Attack

By [AFP](#)

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AP Photo/Pavel Bednyakov

Hundreds of Russians placed flowers at Crocus City Hall in the Moscow suburb of Krasnogorsk Saturday, paying homage to the 145 victims of the terrorist attack, one year on.

Images of the March 22, 2024, attack on the concert hall near Moscow circulated around the world, showing four men opening fire on the more than 5,000 people gathered to watch the Russian rock group Piknik and finishing off the wounded.

Maxim Burnayev, a 34-year-old construction worker who was with his wife at the hall the day of the attack, told AFP he had witnessed “the horror that unfolded.”

“It was like in a movie, but it was real,” he recalled.

It was Russia's deadliest attack in 20 years and lasted about 20 minutes. After the shootings, the assailants set the hall on fire and fled the scene.

The attack was claimed by the Islamic State, which is banned in Russia as a terrorist organization.

“You can't forget it. We came here now to Crocus, and my heart was beating fast. Even though it's been a year, there are still memories,” Burnayev said.

After seeing a psychologist, he said today he was trying to “let it all go and continue to live, enjoy life” even though the sight of the bloodied concert hall still haunts him.

A monument dedicated to the victims was inaugurated on Saturday, in the presence of Moscow region governor Andrei Vorobyov, near the fire-damaged building.

People laid flowers, photos of their deceased loved ones and teddy bears at the new monument, which features two black marble pillars with cranes soaring into the sky. An Orthodox priest led a service.

Maria Zhukovskaya, 37, a volunteer, said: “How could you not come here? How could you not honor the memory of the people who dreamed, lived, had wishes, and at one moment it all collapsed?”

Anna Movchan, 28, while she did not know any of the victims personally said, “We are residents of this city. This is a terrible tragedy, so we came out to support our country, our people and mourn together.”

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Most of the people questioned by AFP after the ceremony chose not to comment on the investigation or the perpetrators.

Earlier in March, U.S. authorities announced the arrest of Mohammad Sharifullah, an IS leader suspected of organizing an attack on the Kabul airport that claimed 183 lives, including that of 13 U.S. soldiers in 2021.

Sharifullah reportedly admitted to “having shared instructions on the use” of the Kalashnikov rifles used in the Crocus attack, and also “recognized” two of the four assailants arrested in Russia.

Anna, a 40-year-old administrator who lost a relative in the attack, said she wanted “all those responsible to be punished.”

“The guilty aren't just those who took part in the attack, but others as well. Maybe the organizers, maybe the authorities,” she added.

Yevgenia, 38, deputy director of a construction company, was supposed to be at a restaurant in the area the night of the attack but canceled at the last minute.

“I think security was poorly organized” at Crocus, she said. “We've been here more than once before and there are just guys standing at a metal detector.”

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The Russian Investigative Committee said in a statement Saturday it had “completed the investigation” concerning the 19 suspects involved, including the four alleged assailants.

“The investigation has concluded that the terrorist act was planned and organized by the security services of an unfriendly state in order to destabilize the situation in Russia.”

“Members of an international terrorist organization were recruited to carry it out,” the committee said without naming the group.

Weeks after the attack, Russia for the first time attributed its coordination to IS while also continuing to maintain accusations against Ukraine for being behind the tragedy.

Russia has never provided evidence to support claims against Ukraine. Kyiv has consistently denied any involvement.

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