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Russia Bans Entry to Dozens of Polish Bikers Over Military Cemetery March

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Security footage of the group of Polish bikers at the Tver cemetery. **69mvd.rf**

Russian authorities banned entry to 39 Polish bikers accused of staging an unauthorized rally at a Polish military cemetery in the Tver region.

The Mednoye Memorial Complex is the site of the second-largest massacre of Polish officers and prisoners by Soviet secret police in 1940. Poland and Russia jointly opened the Polish War Cemetery there in 2000.

Over the weekend, pro-Kremlin media reported that dozens of Polish bikers had broken into the memorial complex to hold a "torchlight ceremony" and were subsequently arrested.

Regional police said on Sunday that 39 people were charged with unauthorized entry and given five-year entry bans. The group was said to have entered Russia via Belarus.

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An association of Polish motorcyclists, called Stowarzyszenie Kocham Polskę, said it had organized a prayer and mass at the cemetery last Wednesday but did not mention any arrests. It shared photos of bikers holding torches at the memorial complex.

The group said its members had visited other execution sites of Polish prisoners in Russia and Belarus in recent days.

Stowarzyszenie Kocham Polskę did not immediately respond when reached for comment.

Soviet secret police killed some 22,000 Polish officers in 1940 in the Katyn forest, in modern-day Ukraine's Kharkiv, and in Mednoye. For decades, the Soviet Union blamed the massacre on Nazi Germany.

In May, Poland's Foreign Ministry protested the removal of military symbols from the Polish War Cemetery in Mednoye. The cemetery confirmed on its website that it had removed the military symbols following "violations of federal law."

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