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## Russians Honor a Crusading Journalist

Small Crowds, Overseen by Police, Gather at Memorials on Anniversary of Slaying

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MOSCOW, Oct. 7 -- The one-year anniversary of the execution-style murder of the crusading journalist [Anna Politkovskaya](#) was marked Sunday by competing memorial events in [Moscow](#) that drew scant crowds and droves of police on a miserably wet day.

About 2,500 police officers, including some on horseback, were deployed in and around Pushkin Square in the center of the city where several hundred people listened to a series of political speeches that both eulogized the reporter and attacked [the Kremlin](#).

A smaller and more relaxed police presence was visible in another part of the city where a pro-Kremlin youth group celebrated President [Vladimir Putin](#)'s 55th birthday.

"In death, she confirmed that what she wrote is real and true," Lyudmila Alexeyeva, head of the Moscow Helsinki Group, a human rights organization, told the crowd in Pushkin Square. "Violence and lies rule in our country, and it's a disgrace."

There were brief chants of "Putin without [Russia](#)," a common refrain at opposition rallies, which prompted the head of the Glasnost Defense Foundation, Alexei Simonov, to retort: "What is much sadder is Russia without Politkovskaya."

The Pushkin Square event was organized in part by presidential candidate and former prime minister Mikhail Kasyanov, whose supporters waved the flags of his party. Organizers asked that flags be lowered during a minute of silence because Politkovskaya was not a member of any party -- an instruction that some in the crowd had difficulty following because they were listening to their [iPods](#) during the speeches.

"She was the conscience of our nation," said Yekaterina Veselovskaya, 60, a retired elementary school teacher who attended the rally on Pushkin Square. "There are very few people here; many more should have come. But people are afraid or apolitical and stay in their warm homes."

Other members of the opposition, notably chess star [Garry Kasparov](#), objected to turning the memorial into a political rally and refused to attend.

"This is not a day for political events -- not for rallies, not for flags, not for confrontation," Kasparov said in an interview at an open-air photo exhibition commemorating Politkovskaya in another part of the city. "Any other day of the year, but not today."

Earlier in the day, Kasparov and others put up a plaque outside the apartment building where Politkovskaya

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was killed, and colleagues of the journalist gathered privately at her graveside. Other memorials were held in cities across [Europe](#).

City officials also gave a permit to the Movement of the Older Generation to hold an anti-opposition rally in the same park as the photo exhibit. The group blared music as people walked past portraits of Politkovskaya and photos from the conflict in the southern republic of [Chechnya](#), which defined her work.

"It may have been a stupid mistake," Tanya Lokshina, head of the Demos Center, a human rights group, said about the timing of the two events. "I'm not sure it was deliberate."

But in the central Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod, officials clearly wanted to disrupt a planned roundtable discussion of Politkovskaya's legacy, organizers said. Five foreign human rights activists were detained there, allegedly for failing to register with local authorities. But organizers said hotels were pressured to renege on reservations, forcing visitors to stay in private homes, which makes the registration process much more time-consuming and difficult.

The murder of Politkovskaya remains unresolved. Police arrested 11 suspects but some were later released for lack of evidence, and editors at Novaya Gazeta, Politkovskaya's newspaper, accused the authorities of attempting to sabotage the case. Prosecutors, without providing evidence, also linked the killing to unnamed enemies of the Kremlin who reside outside Russia -- code for the exiled tycoon and Putin critic [Boris Berezovsky](#), who lives in [London](#).

Russia's federal ombudsman, Vladimir Lukin, said Sunday that solving the case was "of crucial importance for the public and the state."

"Establishing the names of the organizers of the murder is the key thing, which has yet to be done," he said Sunday, the Russian news agency [Interfax](#) reported.

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