

Romanovs Demand Probe of Last Tsar's Murder

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The self-proclaimed heir to Russia's imperial throne asked prosecutors Friday to reopen an investigation into the murder of Tsar Nicholas II and his family, who were shot dead by the Bolsheviks in 1918.

The Investigative Committee said it had formally closed a criminal investigation into the killing of Nicholas II because too much time had elapsed since the crime and because those responsible had died.

But monarchists said a resumption of the criminal case is essential if Russia is finally to come to terms with its brutal past.

"This case is essential for Russia," said Alexander Zakatov, who represents Grand Duchess Maria Vladimirovna, a Romanov who styles herself as the heir to the imperial throne.

"Russians need to know about the fate of the tsarist family and all of the other victims of the Communist regime. There should be a clear legal verdict on this," said Zakatov, who heads the

chancellery of Russia's so-called Imperial House.

He said lawyers for Maria Vladimirovna had asked Moscow's Basmany District Court to force prosecutors to reopen the case, which he said was needed to resolve a host of questions about the murder and remains said to belong to the last tsar.

Nicholas II, his wife and five children were killed by a revolutionary firing squad on the night of July 16-17, 1918, in the cellar of a merchant's house in Yekaterinburg.

They were recognized by the Supreme Court as victims of Bolshevik repression in 2008, a step Zakatov said the prosecutor general has ignored in official documents.

Remains believed to belong to the tsar and his family were exhumed in 1991 and reburied in 1998 in the imperial crypt of the St. Peter and Paul Cathedral in St. Petersburg.

But the Russian Orthodox Church says it is still unclear whether the remains are in fact those of the last tsar and his family, a view supported by many members of the Romanov family.

"The Russian Orthodox Church and the Imperial House have so far not found enough evidence to recognize those remains as those of the tsarist family," Zakatov said.

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