

Russian court orders 'rehabilitation' of czar: Necessary to overcome bloody Soviet-era legacy

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In a move that both monarchists and human rights activists say is necessary for Russia to overcome its legacy of Soviet-era bloodshed, the country's highest court has ruled that Nicholas II, Russia's last czar, and his family were victims of political repression.

The October 1 ruling by the appeals presidium of the Russian Supreme Court ends a years-long legal battle led by members of the Romanov family. The presidium ruled that Nicholas II and his wife, Alexandra, along with their four daughters and son, were victims of "groundless repression" in 1917 and ordered their rehabilitation.

In 2000, the Russian Orthodox Church canonized the murdered Romanovs as "holy passion bearers" because of what the church said was their steadfast faith in the face of death.

Russian Orthodox officials welcomed the latest court decision. Vsevolod Chaplin, deputy head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, said that uncertainty over the issue "had been a heavy burden on the nation's conscience."

Russian human rights activists are often at odds with monarchists, whom they see as politically conservative. Still, many human rights supporters, including Arseny Roginsky, chair of Memorial, a group that researches the history of Stalinist repression, have also been vocal advocates of the Romanovs' rehabilitation.

Human rights activists have said that the family's brutal murder presaged mass repression, and that the state's failure to recognize it as a crime was a way of avoiding responsibility for other crimes of the Soviet era. *-Ecumenical News International*