

Address to citizens of Russia

March 23, 2024 15:30

President of Russia Vladimir Putin: Citizens of Russia,

I am addressing you today in connection with a horrific and savage act of terrorism, which claimed the lives of dozens of peaceful, innocent people – our compatriots, including children, teenagers, and women. Doctors are fighting to save the lives of the victims in critical condition. I am confident that they will do everything within their power, and even beyond, to preserve the lives and health of all those injured. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to ambulance crews, air ambulance teams, special forces, firefighters, and rescuers, who made every effort to save lives and rescue people from the gunfire, from the epicentre of fire and smoke, preventing even greater losses.

I cannot but acknowledge the help provided by ordinary citizens who, in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, did not remain indifferent or apathetic and provided first aid and transported the victims to hospitals, working alongside doctors and special agencies' personnel.

We will provide the necessary support to all the families whose lives have been affected by this horrible atrocity, to the wounded and the injured. I express my deepest and most sincere condolences to all those who have lost their loved ones. The entire country, all our people are grieving together with you. I declare March 24 a day of national mourning.

Additional anti-terrorist and anti-sabotage measures have been introduced in Moscow, the Moscow Region, and all regions of the country. Our top priority now is to prevent those behind this bloody massacre from committing another crime.

Regarding the investigation of this crime and the results of the operational search action, we can currently say the following. All four perpetrators, who were directly

involved in the terrorist attack, all those who shot and killed people, have been found and apprehended. They attempted to escape and were heading towards Ukraine, where, according to preliminary information, a window was prepared for them on the Ukrainian side to cross the state border. A total of 11 people have been detained. The Federal Security Service and other law enforcement agencies are working diligently to identify and expose the accomplice base behind these terrorists: those who provided them with transport, planned escape routes from the crime scene, and prepared caches with weapons and ammunition.

The investigative and law enforcement agencies will spare no effort to establish all the details of this crime. However, it is already clear that we are confronted not simply with a carefully and cynically planned terrorist attack, but a premediated and organised mass murder of peaceful, defenceless people. The perpetrators cold-bloodedly and deliberately targeted our citizens, including our children, with the intent to kill them at close range. Like the Nazis who once carried out massacres in the occupied territories, they planned to stage a demonstrative execution, a bloody act of intimidation.

All perpetrators, organisers and masterminds of this crime will face fair and inevitable punishment, whoever they may be and whoever directed them. I emphasise once more: we will identify and bring to justice each and every individual who stands behind these terrorists, those who orchestrated this atrocity, this assault against Russia and our people.

We understand what the terrorist threat means. In this regard, we rely on cooperation with all states that sincerely share our pain and are ready to really join forces in the fight against a common enemy, international terrorism and all its manifestations.

Terrorists, murderers, those inhumane individuals who have no nationality and cannot have one, face one and the same gloomy prospect – retribution and oblivion. They have no future. Our common duty now, shared by our comrades–in-arms at the front and all citizens of our country, is to stand united as one. I am confident that we will, for nothing and no one can shake our unity and will, our determination and courage, the strength of the united people of Russia. No force will be able to sow the poisonous seeds of discord, panic or disunity in our multi-ethnic society.

Russia has weathered the most arduous, sometimes unbearable trials more than once, yet it has emerged even stronger. And so it shall be now, as well.

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