



Destroyed makeshift memorial in Yekaterinburg, 18 February 2024 / Photo: Anya Marchenkova for OVD-Info

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ARTICLES

## **“Girls, didn’t you know you’re not allowed to carry flowers?”**

**A young woman, Ksenia (name changed for her safety), was stopped from leaving flowers in memory of Alexey Navalny by law enforcement. Here’s what she had to say:**

### **ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ**

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

**ПОДПИСАТЬСЯ**

The news about Navalny’s murder caught me off guard. It came like a punch in the gut. After following the news all day, I felt exhausted, so I tried to distract myself. I’m still actively following the case. Despite understanding how our government works — that they likely killed him — I still didn’t

want to believe it. I didn't want to believe that it was true and I still cannot fully comprehend it.

He was already imprisoned in the far north. How could he threaten Putin there? It doesn't make sense. The people in power are nothing but cowards. They disgust me, and many others would agree.

I felt awful when I woke up the next day. Eventually I thought: : to hell with it, I want to leave flowers at the memorial, so I will. A friend accompanied me, but I still would have gone alone. I wasn't scared, just anxious and upset. If I got charged with an administrative offense, it would put my job at risk, but I still went because I had to.

We arrived at the memorial with two bouquets of carnations. Everything was silent all around, we didn't see a single person. The memorial had been removed. It was a Saturday, and no one was there except for the police.

When the law enforcement officers saw that we had flowers, special forces immediately appeared from the cars. Even though they followed us, we just walked around calmly.

We went to another nearby memorial, but everything had been removed. All the flowers and photos were gone; there were only police. . Finally, we reached the monument of Tatischev and de Gennin (the founders of Yekaterinburg, the city where Ksenia lives). I told my friend I was going to put flowers on the monument. «Ksenia, do you want to be arrested?» she asked, «Let's take a step back and smoke a cigarette.»



«Do not give up» sign at the improvised memorial in Yekaterinburg, 18 February 2024 / Photo: Anya Marchenkova

As soon as we reached the monument, uniformed police emerged from nearby cars and began approaching us. The memorial had already been removed, so we would have just put the flowers next to the monument. I think that had the memorial not been removed, nothing would have stopped me. I was prepared for anything they might do: I took a backpack with everything I could possibly need, assuming that I might spend the following night in detention. . It didn't matter: the memorial had been removed, so we decided not to risk it.

We stepped aside and sat down on a bench. A man in uniform came up to us, smiling smugly, and said, «Have your boyfriends given you flowers, girls? Please go home and put them in a vase.» We nodded. Seven minutes later, two officers in civilian clothes came up to us. One of them showed his FSB ID, as I assumed. The other one was wearing a balaclava—only his eyes were visible. «Girls, did you know it's been forbidden to walk around with flowers?» asked one of the men.

I really wanted to ask them to show us the exact place in the constitution that forbids us from walking around with

flowers. We weren't detained. After we finished our cigarettes, we left. On the way home, we threw our bouquets in the trash.

Everyone around me is experiencing panic and shock. Everything is hopeless — can we fall even lower? Every time something bad happens, it seems things can't get much worse, but they always do. When will this finally end? We're all tired of it. Everyone I spoke to –including my mum–reacted similarly; at least my people agree with me.

*Recorded by Marina-Maya Govzman*

## **ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?**

Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

**ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ**