

## In support of Memorial:

### Public call by human rights and other organizations in the OSCE region due to the intention of the Russian authorities to wind up two oldest human rights organizations in the country<sup>54</sup>

22 November 2021

It became known on November 11, 2021, that the Prosecutor General's Office of the Russian Federation filed a lawsuit to wind up Memorial International for allegedly systematic violations of the law on “foreign agents”. The organization is accused of not labeling its materials with a reference to its “foreign agent” status.

Other structural divisions of the organization, including the Memorial Human Rights Center (hereinafter Memorial HRC) can also be wound up. The reason is several long-standing so-called “labeling violations”, for each of which Memorial HRC has already paid two huge fines, as well as technical claims to the publication of reports.

In addition, the statement of the Moscow Prosecutor's Office contains a politically motivated accusation that, in violation of the Federal Constitutional Law “On the Judicial System of the Russian Federation” Memorial HRC allegedly “denies the facts established by the decisions of the Russian Federation Supreme Court that have come into force, forms an opinion about their illegality and optional execution”. Memorial HRC is also unjustifiably imputed that the organization's materials contain signs of “justifying” the activities of members of “terrorist” and “extremist” organizations, and that these materials “form the opinion among their addressees about the admissibility of participation in the activities of extremist and terrorist organizations”. By justifying extremism and terrorism, the Moscow Prosecutor's Office means the lists of political prisoners maintained by the Memorial HRC political prisoners support program, as well as information on individual cases.

The true motive behind the intentions to wind up Memorial International and Memorial HRC is the desire of the Russian authorities to destroy any public discussion and human rights support of people who are persecuted for political reasons, as well as to stop research on the repressions of the Soviet period and delete the historical memory of the mass crimes committed during this period.

We welcome the protest of the Council of Europe Secretary General and her call<sup>55</sup> to revise the procedure for the elimination of so-called “foreign agents”, as well as to bring Russian legislation on non-governmental organizations in line with the Council of Europe standards. We strongly urge the Council of Europe to take decisive actions if this call is not heeded by the Russian authorities.

We also call on the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to protect the rights of Memorial International and Memorial HRC to operate, and the OSCE Secretary General and Chairperson to express their disagreement with the steps taken by the Russian authorities to suppress human rights activities that should be welcomed in accordance with OSCE commitments.

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<sup>54</sup> This statement was initiated and written by members of the Civic Solidarity Platform, signed by more than 100 organisations, and released on 22.11.2021. For the list of signatures, please see <https://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/1841/public-call-human-rights-and-other-organizations-osce-region-due-intention-russian>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/secretary-general-concerned-by-plans-to-liquidate-international-memorial-in-the-russian-federation>

We appeal to international institutions, human rights organizations, democratic governments, all active citizens, and request by all legal means to protest against the next round of political repression in Russia, which, in the event of the two oldest human rights organizations winding up, will reach their point of no return.

In this case, the blow of the Russian authorities is directed against human rights defenders, which is a violation of the international obligations of the Russian Federation, in particular, the Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998 on the rights and responsibilities of individuals, groups and bodies of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.