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Press release | 24.11.2021

Government must halt attacks on ‘Memorial’ & civil society

Russia

Tomorrow, Memorial, one of the most prominent Russian human rights organisations, and a former Sakharov Prize laureate, is facing threats of being dismantled by the Russian courts. The action by prosecutors is based on allegations that Memorial has failed to comply with requirements of the controversial law on ‘foreign agents’, legislation that stigmatises civil society, human rights defenders, media, and individuals. This law has been denounced by the Greens/EFA Group and the European Parliament from the start.

Reinhard Bütikofer MEP, member of the Foreign Affairs committee, comments;

“For 34 years, Memorial has been a moral and ethical authority in Russian politics. Co-founded by Andrei Sakharov in 1987, they were awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament in 2009. Memorial has been active in educating generations of young Russians about their own history. Memorial has contributed very much to Russian-Polish and Russian-German reconciliation.

“Memorial is the most important voice for shared European values and in particular for human rights in Russia. The attempt of the Putin regime to liquidate Memorial demonstrates that Russia's dictator has decided to pursue the Chinese way. That is a signal not just to Russia´s society, but also to Russia´s European neighbours.”

Sergey Lagodinsky MEP, member of the Foreign Affairs committee, comments;

“The threat to dissolve Memorial is another low point in Putin’s crackdown on civil society in Russia. We call on the Russian authorities to withdraw the request to close Memorial and to abolish the stigmatising ‘foreign agent’ legislation.

“Memorial has been indispensable for documenting and educating about the crimes of the Soviet regime. More recently it has been supporting political prisoners in Russia. No wonder that Putin feels threatened. As

we stand in solidarity with Memorial and the Russian civil society, it is also important to remember the grave, and sometimes deadly, situations political prisoners and other persecuted citizens are facing in Russia every day."

More:

The Russian human rights organisation Memorial is made up of the two organisations Memorial International and Memorial Human Rights Centre.

On the 11th of November, Memorial International was notified by the Russian Supreme Court that the Prosecutor General's office was seeking to liquidate it. The hearing will be held on the 25th of November. It has also become public that the Moscow Prosecutor's office is seeking a similar lawsuit against Memorial Human Rights Centre. The date for that hearing is still unknown.

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