

Network of Concerned Historians			NCH	
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Name
2017		88	Russia	Yuri Dmitriev
	2020			<i>Follow-up 1</i>
	2021			<i>Follow-up 2</i>

Announcement

Index on Censorship is organizing a campaign to send a message of support to six human rights activists and journalist who have been detained on trumped-up charges. One of them is Yuri Dmitriev, a Karelian Gulag historian who has been the subject of several *Annual Report* items and two campaigns ([here](#) and [here](#)) of the Network of Concerned Historians.

We kindly invite you to write and send a small message of support for Yuri Dmitriev [here](#).

Please find below:

- ** the Index on Censorship campaign and
- ** a NCH summary of the case.

<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2020/12/let-them-know-they-are-not-forgotten/>

Index on Censorship

Let them know they are not forgotten

Join us in sending messages of support to six human rights activists and journalists around the world who are #JailedNotForgotten

1 December 2020

2020 has been a terrible year for the world.

Unfortunately, for some human rights activists, free speech supporters and journalists, 2020 is just yet another year they have spent in prison, incarcerated on trumped-up charges for speaking out against the actions of authoritarian regimes.

As 2020 comes to a close, we want them to know that no matter how long they have been in jail, they have not been forgotten. We have chosen six people whose plights must not be forgotten as part of our new #JailedNotForgotten campaign.

Early in 2021, we will send cards containing messages of support from the Index team but we are also asking for you to stand in solidarity with them. Please use the form below to personalise your message to the chosen six:

- Aasif Sultan, who was arrested in Kashmir after writing about the death of Buhran Wani and has been under illegal detention without charge for more than 800 days;
- Golrokh Emrahimi Iraee, jailed for writing about the practice of stoning in Iran;
- Hatice Duman, the former editor of the banned socialist newspaper Atılım, who has been in jail in Turkey since 2002;
- Khaled Drareni, jailed in Algeria for ‘incitement to unarmed gathering’ simply for covering the weekly Hirak protests that are calling for political reform in the country;
- Loujain al-Hathloul, a women’s rights activist known for her attempts to raise awareness of the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia;
- Yuri Dmitriev, a historian being silenced by Putin in Russia for creating a memorial to the victims of Stalinist terror and facing fabricated sexual assault charges.

Add your message of support using the form below.

You can also sign up to receive our weekly newsletter, which features news relating to freedom of expression issues around the world. You do not need to sign up to this to send a message.

NCH CASE SUMMARY

On 13 December 2016, the Federal Security Service (FSB) arrested Karelian historian Yuri Dmitriev (1956–) and held him in remand prison on charges of “preparing and circulating child pornography” and “depravity involving a minor [his foster child, eleven or twelve years old in 2017].” The arrest came after an anonymous tip: the individual and his motives, as well as how he got the private information, remain unknown. Dmitriev said the “pornographic” photos of his foster child were taken because medical workers had asked him to monitor the health and development of the girl, who was malnourished and unhealthy when he and his wife took her in at age three with the intention of adopting her. Each photograph was accompanied by notation of the girl’s height, weight, and general health. Many of them appeared to have been taken ahead of scheduled visits by social workers, to document that she had been well treated. According to social-services reports, nothing suspicious was ever noted. Dmitriev was also charged with illegal possession of a weapon stemming from a piece of a vintage hunting rifle that investigators found in his flat – a relic his lawyer said Dmitriev recovered during a research dig. Dmitriev denied all allegations, saying that he had been framed because of his activities as a historian. Colleagues in Russia and abroad argued that the charges were trumped-up to punish him for his past research and to silence him in the future.

As the head of the Karelian chapter of the rights-advocacy group Memorial, Dmitriev had assembled a Book of Remembrance that included the names of 13,000 victims of the Great Terror (1936–1939). In 1997, he and his colleagues Irina Fliege and Veniamin Iofe, discovered the Sandarmokh and Krasny Bor mass graves, where more than 9,500 prisoners representing over sixty ethnic groups from the Solovki GULAG camp were executed and buried by Stalin’s secret police NKVD in 1937–1938. In addition, over strong resistance from Karelian security agents, Dmitriev lobbied to have the spot memorialized (today there is a large stone memorial at the site). He had participated in a Memorial project to create an online database giving details about some 40,000 NKVD agents, who were directly responsible for the murders of some one million Soviet citizens during the Great Terror, as well as the persecution of millions more (the “executioners’ database”). Shortly after the publication, Memorial started receiving threats and unambiguous “recommendations” to end the project. More than 33,000 people signed an online petition denouncing the charges against Dmitriev as “a provocation.” Historians and activists from Ukraine and Poland published open letters of support. During the investigation and while Dmitriev was in custody, the latter’s latest research – 450 pages – and his entire research archive disappeared without a trace. In August [2016], for the first time in 20 years, the Karelian government and the Russian Orthodox Church declined from taking part in commemorations in Sandarmokh. Large numbers of historians, political analysts, writers and others spoke out in Dmitriev’s defense.

On 1 June 2017, Dmitriev's trial before a local court in Petrozavodsk (Karelia's capital) began. On 25 July 2017, the Memorial Human Rights Center demanded his release and an end to what it called a political trial. On 26 December 2017, a group of experts ruled that the photos were not pornographic. Prosecutors requested a third assessment of the photos. On 27 December 2017, the court in Petrozavodsk granted the request but at the same time ordered to release Dmitriev from pretrial custody by 28 January 2018. Dmitriev would be barred from leaving the city without permission while the investigation continued. In the week of 8 January 2018, Dmitriev was due to begin enforced psychiatric testing to determine whether he had "sexual deviations" amid fears he would be falsely declared insane notwithstanding the fact that a previous psychiatric evaluation had declared him to be of sound mind.

On 20 March 2018, the prosecutor requested a nine-year prison sentence for Dmitriev. On 5 April 2018, Dmitriev was acquitted of the child pornography charge, but not of the charge of illegally possessing a weapon. He was sentenced to three months of probation and community service. On 13 April 2018, the Petrozavodsk city prosecutor appealed against Dmitriev's acquittal. On 14 June 2018, the Supreme Court of Karelia overturned the acquittal and ordered a retrial. On 28 June 2018, Dmitriev was re-arrested. On 3 July 2018, Dmitriev was charged with pedophilia ("violent acts of a sexual nature committed against a person under fourteen years of age [his adopted daughter].") Both criminal cases against Dmitriev were merged in October 2018. He faced up to twenty years in prison if convicted. On 23 March 2020, the municipal court extended his pretrial detention until 25 June 2020. Several thousand people signed a petition calling for Dmitriev to be placed under house arrest for the duration of the coronavirus pandemic. On 7 May 2020, the Supreme Court upheld the municipal court decision. On 22 July 2020, Dmitriev was sentenced to three and a half years on the charge of sexual assault for abusing his foster daughter. He was cleared of all other charges. He was set to be released in November 2020 due to time already served. His supporters received the verdict with relief as he was given a much shorter prison term than the fifteen years requested by the prosecution. On 29 September 2020, after an appeal by the prosecutors, an appeals court increased the prison term to thirteen years.

After two Karelian historians (Yuri Kilin, a history professor at Petrozavodsk State University, and Sergei Verigin) in June 2016 proposed the controversial theory that Sandarmokh could contain hundreds of graves of Soviet prisoners of war held in Finnish concentration camps and then killed by Finnish forces during their occupation of Karelia in World War II, excavations sponsored by the Military Historical Society (a state-funded organization created by President Putin in December 2012, headed by Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinsky, and of which Kilin and Verigin were members) took place at Sandarmokh in the summers of 2018 and 2019, uncovering the remains of sixteen corpses that supposedly proved that the killing at Sandarmokh was, at least in part, the work of foreigners. Anatoli Razumov, director of the Center

for Recovered Names in St. Petersburg, described this as an attempt to create “hybrid history” designed to confuse and distort. Antti Kujala, a historian at the University of Helsinki, took a similar view.

Sources: Website about Yuri Dmitriev: <https://dmitrievaffair.com>. Petition for Yuri Dmitriev: <https://www.change.org/p/chairman-of-petrozavodsk-city-court-a-a-sudakov-public-appeal-in-defense-of-yuri-dmitriev>; Memorial petition for Yuri Dmitriev (27 March 2020): <https://www.memo.ru/en-us/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/375> and ; Yelizaveta Mayetnaya, “[Supporters Rally Around Accused Russian Historian Of Stalin's Crimes](#),” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (27 April 2017); “[Ukrainians Ask for International Protection for Russian Historian Who Is Persecuted by FSB](#),” *Human Rights Information Centre* (28 December 2016); [Petition: Освободить историка Юрия Дмитриева](#) (in Russian); “[Stalin’s Shadow: How a Gulag Historian Fell Victim to Russia’s Dark Past](#),” *Moscow Times* (9 June 2017); Andrew Osborn, “[Hunter of Stalin’s Mass Graves on Trial; Friends Say He’s Been Framed](#),” *Reuters* (13 July 2017); Halya Coynash, “[Russia Honours Founders of the Soviet Terror, Jails Historian who Uncovered their Victims](#),” *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 October 2017); “[Russian Historian Charged With Child Pornography To Be Released](#),” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (27 December 2017); Andrew Osborn, “[Russian Historian who Exposed Stalin's Crimes Faces Enforced Psychiatric Testing](#),” *Reuters* (9 January 2018); Ivan Nechepurenko, “[Gulag Historian Ordered to Undergo Psychiatric Testing in Russia](#),” *New York Times* (11 January 2018); AFP, “[Russian Gulag Historian Faces 9 Years in Prison: Lawyer](#),” *Business Standard* (20 March 2018); Oleg Boldyrev, “[Stalin Crimes Expert Cleared over ‘Child Porn’](#),” *BBC News* (6 April 2018); Andrew Kramer, “[Russian Historian Who Exposed Soviet Crimes Is Cleared in Pornography Case](#),” *New York Times* (5 April 2018); “[Yury A. Dmitriev](#),” *Wikipedia* (2 July 2018); “[Russian Stalin Historian Charged With Sexual Assault](#),” *RFE/RL* (3 July 2018); Halya Coynash, “[Russia Arrests Second Historian of Stalin’s Terror](#),” *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 October 2018); PEN International, *Russia’s Strident Stifling of Free Speech, 2012–2018* (London: PEN International, 2018), 20; “[Historian of Stalin-Era Crimes in Court for Sexual Assault, his Second Trial this Year](#)” *RFE/RL News* (18 December 2018); Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2019: Events of 2018* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2019), 485; Frontline Defenders, *Global Analysis 2018* (Blackrock: Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, 2019), 23; EU Statement on Violations of the Rights of Human Rights Defenders in the Russian Federation (PC.DEL/397/18; 13 April 2018); PEN International, *Case List 2018* (London: PEN, 2019), 89–90; PEN International, “[Fair Trial Must Be Guaranteed for Memorial Historian and Human Rights Activist](#)” (4 November 2019); Jamie Dettmer, “[No End in Sight for Jailed Gulag Historian Yury Dmitriyev](#),” *Voice of America* (4 November 2019); Matthew Luxmoore, “[Russian Historian Jailed On Disputed Pedophilia Charges Dies In Custody](#),” *RFE/RL News* (2 April 2020); Halya Coynash, “[Historian of the Soviet Terror Dies in a Russian Prison](#),” *Human Rights in Ukraine* (3 April 2020); Andrew Higgins, “[He Found One of Stalin’s Mass Graves: Now He’s in Jail](#),” *New York Times* (27 April 2020); International PEN, *The PEN International Case List 2019* (London: PEN, 2020), 90–91; “[Russian Court Upholds Decision To Extend Detention of Prominent Gulag Historian](#),” *RFE/RL News* (7 May 2020); PEN America, *Freedom to Write Index 2019* (Washington: PEN America, 2020), 8; “[Russian Historian Jailed in Controversial Sex Abuse Case](#),” *BBC News* (22 July 2020); PEN, “[Conviction of Russian Writer and Historian ‘Deplorable’](#)” (New York 22 July 2020); Yuri Dmitriev, “[Closing Statement before the Court](#),” *Meduza* (21 July 2020); RFE/RL & Matthew Luxmoore, “[Russia: Gulag Historian’s Conviction Denounced As Escalation Of War With Its Past – Analysis](#)” *Eurasia Review* (23 July 2020); “[Yuri Dmitriyev: Russian Historian’s Sex Abuse Sentence Increased](#),” *BBC News* (29 September 2020); Olivier Rolin, “[Yuri Dmitriev: Historian of Stalin’s Gulag, Victim of Putin’s Repression](#),” *New York Review of Books* (7 October 2020).