

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Name
2021		102	Russia	Memorial – risk of liquidation

Announcement

The [Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#) requests us to protest against the risk of liquidation of Memorial in Russia.

The International Historical Educational Charitable and Human Rights Society “Memorial” ([International Memorial](#)) is a non-commercial organization studying political repressions in the USSR and in present-day Russia and promoting moral and legal rehabilitation of persons subjected to political repressions.

Please see below:

- (1) a NCH summary of the case,
- (2) the Observatory’s request.

Please send your appeal, preferably written in your professional capacity, as soon as possible.

P.S. 1: For a previous NCH campaign on behalf of Memorial (in 2008), see [here](#).

P.S. 2: For two legal cases brought by Memorial in Russia (2011 and 2015), see [here](#) [in Russian]

P.S. 3: For three legal cases brought by Memorial before the European Court of Human Rights (2017–2018), see [here](#) [in English].

NCH SUMMARY

On 11 November 2021, the Prosecutor-General’s Office filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court to liquidate Memorial, an international historical and human rights society founded in 1987–1989, for alleged repeated violations of the “foreign agents” act – a controversial 2012 law that requires NGOs to register as “foreign agents” if they engage in political activity and receive foreign funding.

International Memorial was added to the “foreign agents” registry in October 2016 and had since been fined at least 21 times. The case will be heard on 25 November 2021.

Sources: Andrew Roth, “[Russia Moves to Shut Down Country’s Most Celebrated Civil Rights Group](#),” *Guardian* (11 November 2021); “[Memorial: Russia Moves to Close Major Human Rights Group](#),” *BBC* (11 November 2021); “[Russian Prosecutor-General’s Office Takes Aim At Memorial Rights Group](#),” *RFE/RL* (11 November 2021); Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde, “[Erklärung zur beantragten Auflösung von Memorial International](#)” (petition; 14 November 2021); The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, “[Appeal RUS 007 / 1121 / OBS 117](#)” (15 November 2021); Joint Statement by Russian and International Human Rights Groups in Support of Memorial, “[Memorial: Russian Authorities Move to Shut Down a Human Rights Giant](#)” (press release; 15 November 2021); Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, “[Statement: The Russian Authorities Should Discontinue the Liquidation of Memorial and Repeal the “Foreign Agents” Law as a Matter of Priority](#)” (press release; 17 November 2021).

<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/russia-risks-of-liquidation-of-international-memoria-and-the-human>

RUS 007 / 1121 / OBS 117

Risk of liquidation / Judicial harassment / Obstacles to freedom of association / Obstacles to freedom of expression /

Russian Federation

November 15, 2021

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership of International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in the Russian Federation.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed about the risks of liquidation of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) International Memorial (1) and the Human Rights Center “Memorial” (HRC Memorial) (2) in Moscow.

On November 11, 2021, International Memorial received a notification from the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation informing them that the Prosecutor General's Office filed a lawsuit against the NGO. In the lawsuit, the Prosecutor General's Office requested the liquidation of International Memorial on the ground that the NGO systematically violated Russia's "Foreign Agent" law, in particular, the requirements to label all their materials (3).

Similarly, on November 12, 2021, HRC Memorial [learned](#) that Moscow Prosecutor's Office had brought an action before the Moscow City Court on November 8, 2021, asking for the liquidation of the NGO, on the grounds of failing to comply with the requirements of the "Foreign Agent" law and for "justification of terrorism and extremism." The latter charges stem from HRC Memorial's statements and analytical documents concerning political prisoners, in particular Crimean Tatars and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the NGO's lists of political prisoners, which it maintains and publishes on its website. The Observatory recalls that since 2013, Russian authorities have labelled some member organizations of the Memorial movement as "foreign agents," including both International Memorial and the HRC Memorial.

The preliminary hearing in the case of International Memorial is set to take place on November 25, 2021 while the preliminary hearing in the case of HRC Memorial is scheduled for November 23, 2021.

The Observatory recalls that this is not the first time that the Memorial movement has faced acts of harassment and obstacles to its work, including through fines and searches of their premises across the country. Both organizations have paid millions of rubles in fines stemming from alleged violations of the "foreign agents" law, which has been found to be [contrary](#) to both international and domestic law.

Moreover, on October 14, 2021, the premises of International Memorial and HRC "Memorial" in Moscow were [attacked](#) by a group of over a dozen unknown people equipped with video cameras, interrupting the screening of a film. On this occasion, instead of searching the attackers, the police questioned the attendees of the screening and International Memorial's staff and locked them into Memorial's office for several hours. Moreover, several human rights defenders from the Memorial movement have been imprisoned on politically motivated charges, including [Oyub Titiev](#), head of HRC Memorial's office in Chechnya and [Yury Dmitriyev](#), head of Karelian branch of International Memorial.

The Observatory expresses its utmost concern regarding these legal proceedings and the threat of dissolution that International Memorial and HRC Memorial are facing, and calls on the Russian authorities to immediately put an end to any act of harassment against both NGOs, as well as against all organizations defending human rights in the country.

The Observatory further urges the Russian authorities to ensure in all circumstances that human rights defenders in the country are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance and fear of reprisals and to guarantee the rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression in the country.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Russia, urging them to:

- i. Put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against International Memorial and HRC Memorial as well as against all human rights organizations and defenders in Russia, and ensure in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate activities without any hindrance and fear of reprisals;
- ii. Guarantee, in all circumstances, the rights to freedom of expression, of freedom of assembly and of freedom of association, as enshrined in international human right law, and particularly in Articles 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Addresses:

*** Mr. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, Twitter: @KremlinRussia_E

*** Mr. Mikhail Mishustin, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Twitter: @GovernmentRF

*** Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, E-mail: ministry@mid.ru

*** Mr. Igor Krasnov, General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation, Email: pressa@genproc.gov.ru

*** Mr. Alexander Bortnikov, Director of Federal Security Service (FSS), Email: fsb@fsb.ru

*** Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. E-mail: mission.russian@vtxnet.ch

*** Embassy of the Russian Federation in Brussels, Belgium. E-mail: mission.russian@vtxnet.ch

*** Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe, France. Email: russia.coe@orange.fr

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of the Russian Federation in your respective countries.

Paris-Geneva, November 15, 2021

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of [ProtectDefenders.eu](https://www.protectdefenders.eu), the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

*** E-mail: Appeals@fidh-omct.org

*** Tel. FIDH: +33 (0) 1 43 55 25 18

*** Tel. OMCT: +41 (0) 22 809 49 39

Footnotes

(1) International Memorial is an international civil rights organization established in Moscow in 1989 with regional branches operating in major Russian cities. The NGOs of the International Memorial network focus on revealing the historical truth about mass-scale political repression in the Soviet Union and on defending human rights today.

(2) Human Rights Center Memorial (HRC Memorial) is a subdivision of International Memorial. The activities of HRC Memorial include defending and monitoring the exercising of human rights and basic liberties of citizens and spreading trustworthy information on violations of human rights. HRC Memorial and the International Memorial share offices in Moscow.

(3) Among others, HRC Memorial is accused of having repeatedly failed to comply with Paragraph 1, Article 24 of the Law No. 7 – FZ on “Non-commercial organizations” requiring the labelling of materials diffused by such organizations via the internet, having resulted in eight fines.