

Network of Concerned Historians				NCH
Campaigns				
Year original	Year follow-up	Circular	Country	Name
2017		88	Russia	Yuri Dmitriev

### *Announcement*

The international historical, educational, charitable and human rights society [Memorial](#), based in Moscow, asks you to sign a petition in support of historian and Gulag researcher **Yuri Dmitriev**.

The petition is [here](#) in English and German, or at the following link:

<https://www.change.org/p/chairman-of-petrozavodsk-city-court-a-a-sudakov-public-appeal-in-defense-of-yuri-dmitriev>

Memorial demands a fair trial for Dmitriev who was imprisoned on charges (widely believed to be trumped-up) of child pornography and illegal possession of a weapon.

Please find below (1) a NCH summary of the case and (2) the text of the petition.

[Memorial](#) has received the Right Livelihood Award (2004) and the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament (2009). It was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, 2012 and 2015.

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### **NCH CASE SUMMARY**

On 13 December 2016, the Federal Security Service (FSB) arrested Karelian historian **Yuri Dmitriev** ([1955–]) and held him in remand prison on charges of “preparing and circulating child pornography.” The arrest was made on the basis of an anonymous denunciation: the individual and his motives, as well as how he got the private information, remain unknown. Dmitriev’s trial before a local court in Petrozavodsk began on 1 June 2017; if convicted, he faced between eight and fifteen years’ imprisonment. He was also charged with illegal possession of a weapon charge 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, and colleagues both 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 mass grave, where more than 9,500 prisoners representing over 60 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). Recently, 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 have published open letters of support. During the investigation and while Dmitriev was in custody, the latter’s latest research — 450 pages of meticulous investigation — 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 have spoken out in Dmitriev’s defense. On 25 July 2017, the Memorial Human Rights Center demanded his release and an end to what it called a political trial.

[Sources: Petition for Yuri Dmitriev: <https://www.change.org/p/chairman-of-petrozavodsk-city-court-a-a-sudakov-public-appeal-in-defense-of-yuri-dmitriev>; 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).]

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## TEXT OF PETITION IN ENGLISH AND GERMAN

*Petitioning Chairman of Petrozavodsk City Court A.N. Sudakov and Chairman of the High Court of Karelia A.V. Nakvas*

### **Public Appeal in Defense of GULAG researcher Yuri Dmitriev [by: Memorial]**

On 13 December 2016, on the basis of an anonymous denunciation, Yuri Dmitriev, the Russian historian, GULAG scholar, and chairman of the Karelia Memorial Society, was arrested in Petrozavodsk. He spent five months in detention and his case went to the courts on 1 June, 2017.

For more than 30 years, Yuri Dmitriev has been locating the sites of mass executions that took place in the Stalin era. He researches information on the victims and compiles Books of Memory. His personal contribution to the history of Russia and the restoration of family and national memory is unprecedented. His work is well received by the international historical community: among the names he rescued from oblivion are citizens of various countries and representatives of various nationalities.

Grave charges are made against Yuri Dmitriev today, threatening to destroy his reputation and irreparably damage his honor and dignity: creating pornography, indecent assault on his foster daughter, and illegal possession of firearms. The case will be heard in closed chambers, which precludes public participation and control. Dmitriev's arrest coincides with the information attack against Memorial initiated by the Russian authorities, and the investigation of the case has been made with extremely serious procedural violations that lead us to doubt the investigators' objectivity.

The arrest was made on the basis of an anonymous denunciation. The individual and his motives, as well as how he got the information which is personal and family business, remain unknown.

The reason for the such grave charges are nine photographs of Dmitriev's foster daughter, taken out of context of more than a hundred family photographs, made to chart changes in the child's health, and nonfunctional fragments of a rifle that Dmitriev found in the course of his digging.

In turning to experts, who determined that these photographs were "pornography," the investigators did not inform Yuri Dmitriev and his lawyer of the resolution for expert review, thereby depriving the defense of the opportunity to ask the experts their own questions and to propose an alternative expert organization.

There were no sexologists or other specialists capable of drawing a conclusion on the point of the charges among the people who did the expert analysis. The expert organization—the Center for Sociocultural Expert Analysis—is known for having participated in many notorious political cases on the side of the prosecution, and well-founded doubts were expressed more than once about the objectivity and quality of their conclusions.

At this moment, there is no court decision on appointing independent experts and the materials of the accusation (the photographs) still have not been turned over to the defense in full measure. Thus, the defense is simply deprived of the ability to counter the investigation conclusions.

We hope that this situation will be corrected, otherwise the right of Yuri Dmitriev to a fair trial will be crudely violated.

We demand that Yuri Dmitriev be given the right to a lawful, objective, and fair trial of his case and we hope that our voices will be heard.

***We ask:***

1. For independent qualified expert evaluation of the photographic materials.
2. For the right of the defendant and his lawyer to receive all the materials in the case (including the photographs that are the only basis for the accusation).
3. For a change in the measure of restraint for Yuri Dmitriev.

**German/Deutsch**

**Ein Appell der internationalen Gemeinschaft für die Verteidigung von Yuriy Dmitriev**

Am 13. Dezember 2016 wurde durch eine anonyme Denunziation in Petrosawodsk ein russischer Historiker Yuriy Dmitriev, Forscher des GULAG, Vorsitzender der karelischen Gesellschaft „Memorial“ verhaftet. Fünf Monate lang verbrachte er im Gefängnis. Am 1. Juni wurde sein Fall an das Gericht verwiesen.

Mehr als 30 Jahre sucht Yuriy Dmitriev die Orte der Massenhinrichtungen auf, die während der Zeit der Repressionen Stalins stattfanden. Auch beschäftigte er sich mit dem Sammeln von Informationen über die Opfer und verfasste die Zusammensetzung des "Buches der Erinnerung". Sein persönlicher Beitrag zur Erforschung der Geschichte Russlands, zur Wiederherstellung der Verantwortung über die Geschehnisse der Vergangenheit sowohl innerhalb den Familien, als auch im Volksbewußtsein - ist beispiellos. Die Arbeit des Yuriy Dmitriev wird durch internationale historische Gemeinschaften hoch geschätzt: Darunter sind Bürger aus verschiedenen Ländern, sowie Vertreter verschiedener Nationalitäten.

Heute werden gegen Yuriy Dmitriev schwere Vorwürfe vorgebracht, die seinen Ruf zerstören und irreparable Schäden an seiner Ehre und Würde zu verursachen drohen: die Produktion von Pornografie, anstößiges Verhalten mit seiner Adoptivtochter, illegaler Besitz von Waffen. Dabei verläuft die Anhörung des Falles hinter geschlossenen Türen, was die Beteiligung und öffentliche Kontrolle der Öffentlichkeit ausschliesst. Dmitrievs Verhaftung fiel zusammen mit dem von staatlichen russischen Behörden initiierten Informationsangriff gegen das „Memorial“, die Untersuchung wird auch mit schweren Verfahrensfehlern durchgeführt, dies erzeugt große Zweifel an der Objektivität der Ermittler.

Der Arrest von Yuriy Dmitriev wurde durch eine anonyme Aussage vollzogen. In diesem Fall wird die Identität des Antragstellers und seine Motive, sowie die Wege, wie er an die Informationen kam, die ein Familiengeheimnis sind, der Öffentlichkeit unbekannt geblieben.

Der Grund für solche schweren Beschuldigungen waren neun Fotos von vom Dmitriev adoptierter Tochter, die aus dem allgemeinen Kontext der mehr als Hunderte von Familienfotos gerissen werden

und die gemacht wurden, um die Veränderungen der Gesundheit des Kindes zu dokumentieren, sowie außer Betrieb gesetzte Fragmente von Feuerwaffen, die Dmitriev während seiner Suchoperationen gefunden hat.

Bei der Ernennung des Begutachtens, schloss die Ermittlung Yuri Dmitriev und seinen Anwalt aus bei dem Ergebnis ihrer Feststellung. Dem Angeklagten und seinem Verteidiger wurden zudem keine Informationen über den Grund der Anklage mitgeteilt. Somit wurde der Verteidigungsseite die Möglichkeit beraubt der Expertise Fragen zu stellen und eine alternative Expertenorganisation für eine Überprüfung vor zu schlagen.

Unter den Experten, welche die Untersuchung durchgeführt haben, befinden sich keine Sexualtherapeuten oder andere Experten, die sachgemäss die Feststellung über das Wesen der vorgelegten Anklage machen könnten. Darüber hinaus ist die Expertenorganisation „Zentrum für soziokulturelle Untersuchung“ vielfach bekannt dafür, sich in vielen Fällen bei politischer Verfolgung, Stellung zu leisten auf Seitens der Anklage, dabei wurden begründete Zweifel hervorgerufen über die Objektivität und Qualität einer Expertise. Bisher wird keine gerichtliche Entscheidung über die Ernennung einer unabhängigen Prüfung erwiesen, die Fallmaterialien (Fotos) sind noch nicht in vollem Umfange für die Verteidigung zur Verfügung gestellt. Somit ist der Verteidigung die Möglichkeit genommen, die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung zu widerlegen.

Wir hoffen, dass sich diese Situation im Laufe des Prozesses verbessern wird, da sonst das Recht von Yuri Dmitriev auf ein faires Verfahren grob verletzt würde.

Wir fordern auf für Yuri Dmitriev berechtigtes Recht wiederherzustellen für einen objektiven, fairen Prozess.

Wir hoffen damit sehr, dass unsere Stimmen gehört werden.

***Bitte um:***

1. Geweistung einer unabhängigen Begutachtung von Fotografien.
2. Einforderung des Rechts des Angeklagten und seines Anwalts, die vollständige Akte (einschließlich der Bilder, die die einzigen Gründe für die Anzeige sind) im vollen Umfang zu erhalten.
3. Korrekte Abänderung des Gerichtsurteils für Yury Dmitriev, zum Freispruch.

***This petition will be delivered to:***

Chairman of Petrozavodsk City Court A.N. Sudakov

Chairman of the High Court of Karelia A.V. Nakvas

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