

Statement Concerning the Political Harassment Against 'Memorial', Moscow

Vienna, November 15, 2021

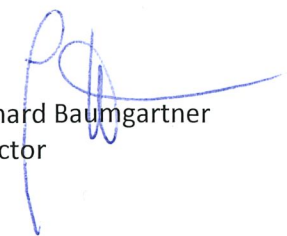
On November 11, 2021, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation gave notice to the International Memorial Society that the General Prosecutor's Office filed to liquidate the organization.

This action was preceded by years of harassment by the Russian authorities -- now under the guise of Memorial's shortcomings to conform to the notorious 2012 "foreign agent" law (alleging that organizations that receive foreign donations, support foreign interests). Its researchers have also been arrested on other spurious charges.

Memorial began in 1987 as an 11-person signature campaign for a monument to victims of Soviet terror under the honorary chairmanship of Andrei Sakharov and has since grown into the most authoritative research centre on Stalinism. It gathered thousands of eyewitness testimonies from Gulag victims and produced outstanding scholarly reference works on the Stalinist state apparatus. More than a generation of researchers has benefitted from these materials, sometimes literally unearthed by Memorial.

Memorial has been in a tug of war with the state for years on how the story of the Stalinist past should be told. This move against the organization manifests an entrenched, systemic hostility to freedom of expression, and the erosion of intellectual and academic freedom in today's Russia. More concerning is that this measure evidences a reinstatement of the type of social control and surveillance that characterized the Soviet period -- reviled practices that were last witnessed in the 1980s.

The court hearing of this case is scheduled for November 25, 2021. We hope that its outcome will support the fact that the future of the past should not be in the hands of the state. The banning of Memorial is not an internal problem of Russia but would also cause irreparable damage to academic freedom and international relations.

  
Gerhard Baumgartner  
Director

*4 октября 2016 года Минюст РФ внес Международный Мемориал в реестр «некоммерческих организаций, выполняющих функцию иностранного агента». Мы обжалуем это решение в суде.*