



PC.DEL/397/18
13 April 2018

ENGLISH only

EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1181
Vienna, 12 April 2018**

**EU statement on Violations of the rights of human rights
defenders in the Russian Federation**

The European Union remains deeply concerned by violations of rights of human rights defenders in the Russian Federation, in particular a series of attacks and assaults against the non-governmental organisation, Memorial, and its representatives. On 18 January, 1 February and 15 March we raised our concerns over the arrest of Mr Oyub Titiev, Head of the office of Memorial in Chechnya, and the arson attacks on Memorial's office in Ingushetia and Titiev's lawyer's car in Dagestan, as well as threats made to a representative of Memorial's office in January. We now have to add to this list the attack on Mr Sirajutdin Datsiev, Head of Memorial's office in Dagestan, on 28 March.

Mr Datsiev was violently assaulted as he was leaving his home for work, and required hospital treatment for an injury to his head. Respected human rights organisations have stated that they believe this attack to be directly connected to his work to promote and protect human rights in Dagestan.

We remind the Russian Federation of their commitments, freely entered into, in Helsinki in 1975 and later in Copenhagen in 1990, to ensure "the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field" and "the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to seek, receive and impart freely views and information on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to disseminate and publish such views and information".

We call on the Russian authorities, both locally and in Moscow, to condemn publicly threats of violence and attacks against human rights defenders as a first step in preventing further violence.

We also ask the Russian delegation whether anyone has been detained as a result of the police investigation into the attack on Mr Datsiev, and what steps they are taking to ensure representatives of organisations such as Memorial are able to carry out their work free from the fear of violence?

We would also welcome a response to our earlier request for an update on the outcome of the investigation into the arson attacks and threats against Memorial and its representatives in Ingushetia and Dagestan.

We also take this opportunity to draw attention to a further questionable prosecution of a human rights actor in the Russian Federation. Earlier this month, Mr Yuri Dmitriev, a respected historian and representative of Memorial, was sentenced to 2.5 years' probation in relation to possession of components of a firearm. The charge was denied by Mr Dmitriev, as was a deeply questionable accusation of child pornography, which concerned his possession of nine photographs of his daughter. While we certainly welcome that Mr Dmitriev has been cleared of this accusation, we regret that the charges unfairly brought against him led to his detention for a period of 13 months.

The case against Mr Dmitriev was widely seen as a politically-motivated prosecution, linked to his work as a historian and representative of Memorial, who has dedicated his life to investigating crimes committed during the Stalinist era. He has worked tirelessly over three decades to document mass graves in the Karelia region of North-West Russia and identify the individual victims within them. His arrest, in December 2016 came two months after the International Memorial Society was included on the register of "foreign agents" by the Russian authorities, and one month after Russian state media accused Memorial of helping "those who aim to destroy the Russian state".

As we said in the Permanent Council on 13 October 2016 in response to its listing as a "foreign agent", Memorial is a well-known and well-respected non-governmental organisation that has worked for many years in the pursuit of truth and justice for all those who suffered persecution and oppression in the Soviet Union.

We again remind the Russian Federation that they have a responsibility to protect human rights defenders and to ensure that all individuals in the Russian Federation are able to know and act upon their rights.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.