



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1019 Vienna, 16 October 2014

EU Statement on the Freedom of Association in the Russian Federation and on the case of Human Rights NGO "Memorial Society"

The European Union is deeply concerned by the ongoing restrictions on Freedom of Association in the Russian Federation. Most recently we have seen the decision of the Russian Justice Ministry to request the liquidation of the prominent human rights NGO "Memorial Society", before the Supreme Court, reportedly on the issue of the conformity of its organisational structure with Russian law.

"Memorial Society" is the umbrella organisation that unites all regional and local "Memorial" organisations, whose representatives were awarded the 2009 Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament. "Memorial" is engaged in human rights, charitable, historical and educational work across Russia. The "Memorial Society" keeps the legacies of victims of Soviet-era repression alive. It is an invaluable source of inspiration for human rights defenders, in Russia and in the whole OSCE area.

This decision illustrates once again the determination of Russian authorities to use all possible provisions of the legislation on Non-Commercial organisations to further weaken or suppress independent NGOs, instead of empowering them. Many organisations such as the St Petersburg-based "ADC Memorial" have been harassed and forced to scale down their activities or even to close completely, as a result of so-called law on "foreign agents".

We urge the Russian government to ensure that its legislation and its implementation conforms to international human rights standards including OSCE commitments.

The Candidate Countries MONTENEGRO*, ICELAND+, ALBANIA* and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.