



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1351 Vienna, 20 January 2022

EU Statement on the Current Issue raised by Norway “On court decisions to liquidate Memorial in the Russian Federation”

1. The European Union deplores the decisions of two Russian courts of 28 and 29 December 2021 to forcibly close Memorial International and the Memorial Human Rights Center respectively. For more than three decades, Memorial has fulfilled a unique role in documenting historical crimes and recovering for posterity the memory of the tens of millions of victims of political repression. Memorial has also advocated tirelessly for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia, where its work includes exposing appalling abuses, including in the North Caucasus, and maintaining a growing list of individuals it considers to be political prisoners. The claim by Russian authorities that Memorial Human Rights Center’s principled and peaceful work “justifies extremism and terrorism” cannot be accepted. Memorial’s work has never been more needed.
2. These decisions confirm a continued negative pattern of shrinking space for independent civil society, human rights defenders, journalists and other media actors and independent political voices, as well as the restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia. We reiterate that lasting security cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law.
3. The EU continues to condemn the Russian legislation on “foreign agents” that runs counter to Russia’s international human rights law obligations. Non-governmental organisations and other civil society actors help societies strive and as such fulfil

an irreplaceable role. We urge the Russian authorities to stop the crackdown on civil society and independent media, to review current legislation in order to bring it in line with its obligations under international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as its OSCE commitments.

4. We continue to follow closely the situation of Yury Dmitriev, a respected historian known for his human rights work and his research on political repression in the Soviet period and Chairman of the Karelia branch of Memorial Historical Society. On 27 December, the Petrozavodsk City Court extended Mr Dmitriev's sentence of imprisonment from 13 to 15 years. We reiterate our concerns about Mr Dmitriev's continuing imprisonment based on spurious charges, which we see connected to his work as historian and human rights defender. 17 January also marks one year since the arrest and imprisonment of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny upon his return to Russia from life-saving medical treatment in Berlin after an assassination attempt on the Russian territory. We reiterate our call on the Russian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Dmitriev, Mr Navalny, and the many others who have been arbitrarily arrested or convicted by politically motivated court decisions.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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