



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S UNJUSTIFIED ATTACKS ON MEMORIAL
INTERNATIONAL AND THE DETERIORATING HUMAN RIGHTS ENVIRONMENT
IN RUSSIA**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 25.11.2021.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame Chair,

For the past months we have witnessed the ever-increasing marginalization of critical voices, opposition, independent media and civil society in Russia. The arbitrary use of the laws on so-called “foreign agents” and “undesirable organisations” allows the authorities to not only shut down civil society organisations, but also pursue individuals associated with them, spreading fear and uncertainty among their members. The decimation of civil society organisations in Russia by means of the judiciary, has been so effective that at this point it is appropriate to speak about a crisis.

Russian authorities' motion to dissolve International Memorial and the Memorial Human Rights Centre is the latest evidence of the harassment and persecution endured by Russian civil society.

Memorial is one of Russia's oldest and most reputable human rights organisations. For more than thirty years they have worked tirelessly to uncover the facts about the political oppression during Soviet times and commemorate the victims of political terror. The organisation is uniquely competent and capable of calling out methods of state repression and their effort to promote civil society and democratic principles in modern day Russia is invaluable.

A pillar of Russian civil society, founded by Russians and made up of Russians, Memorial's safeguarding of Russian history enables future generations to build a better Russia. The dedication and toil put in by its members is an inspiration to neighbouring

countries. It should be the pride of the Russian government, and receive their praise and support. Labelling Memorial a so-called foreign agent is an absurdity, and dissolving it would be a loss for the Russian people.

Mdm Chair,

We are also deeply disturbed by the continued imprisonment of Yuri Dmitriev. As a local leader of Karelia Memorial and a respected historian, he has dedicated himself to human rights work and research on political repression in the Soviet period.

His verdict of 13 years imprisonment is based on spurious charges. We see his imprisonment as a politically motivated response to his research. We call for Mr. Dmitriev's immediate and unconditional release.

We urge Russian authorities to reconsider its initiative to dissolve Memorial, and protect the fundamental freedoms of its citizens, providing a safe space in which independent civil society can perform their important work, in line with OSCE and other international commitments Russia has agreed to.

Thank you