



Plenary sitting

B9-0603/2021

14.12.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on **Continuous crackdown on civil society and human rights defenders in Russia: the case of Human Rights organisation Memorial.**
(2021/3018(RSP))

Helmut Scholz
on behalf of The Left Group

B9-0603/2021

European Parliament resolution on Continuous crackdown on civil society and human rights defenders in Russia: the case of Human Rights organisation Memorial. (2021/3018(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, in particular Articles 29 and 30 of Chapter 2, which protect freedom of speech and the right to association, respectively,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Memorial is the oldest and most prominent civil society organization dedicated to the history of political repression and to human rights in Russia, and Memorial Human Rights Centre and International Memorial Society two of its key entities; whereas in November, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office and the Moscow City Prosecutor's Office filed lawsuits with the Supreme Court of Russia and the Moscow City Court seeking the dissolution of International Memorial Society and of Memorial Human Rights Centre, respectively;
- B. whereas Court hearings started in November, and a recess was ordered until mid-December (2021); whereas the accusations are based on reiterated alleged breaches of Russia's "foreign agents" legislation, notably for failing to identify publicly as foreign agents, which the Prosecutor General's Office considered that constituted violations of the right to freedom of expression and the rights of the child enshrined in the Russian Constitution, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the European Convention on Human Rights; whereas Memorial Human Rights Centre was also accused of "justifying terrorist and extremist activities";
- C. whereas an active civil society sphere is a crucial aspect of a democratic and open society, as well as for safeguarding human rights and the rule of law; whereas civil society organisations must be able to freely exercise the right to association and freedom of expression; whereas the mutual presence of foreign-funded civil society organisations within neighbouring countries can, in the right circumstances, promote and facilitate cultural dialogue and exchange;
- D. whereas any restrictions imposed on the right to association must be necessary and proportionate to a legitimate aim; whereas the involuntary dissolution of an NGO should only be resorted to under exceptional circumstances;

- E. whereas relations between the EU and Russia continue to deteriorate, as illustrated by the EU's several waves of sanctions and Russia's counter-sanctions; whereas sanctions have not lead to any policy changes;
- F. whereas restrictions on the foreign funding of activities by civil society actors, where they are aimed at influencing politics in a given country, exist in multiple jurisdictions including EU Member States; whereas some EU Member States can impose penalties for non-compliance including criminal prosecution and imprisonment¹;
1. Calls on the Russian authorities to refrain from unwarranted reprisals against political opponents and other critical voices of the government; calls on the Russian authorities to drop the charges against Memorial Human Rights Centre and International Memorial Society;
 2. Highlights that many civil society organisations facilitate intercultural dialogue and exchange; calls on Russia to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and secure environment for civil society organisations and citizens, enabling them to carry out their legitimate and useful work without undue interference – such as the threat of violence, harassment, and financial, legal and political pressure; stresses the need to guarantee efficient legal recourse procedures for civil society organisations whose freedom to work has been compromised;
 3. Is particularly concerned about the deteriorating relations between the EU and Russia, and about their detrimental effects on both parties, their economies as well as citizens and their human rights; calls on both the EU and Russia to put an end to the spiral of tensions and engage in a constructive dialogue to overcome their differences, pursue mutual criticism in a respectful manner, and create shared understanding of interests, concerns and approaches; in this light, calls for the immediate abolition of mutual sanctions;
 4. Underlines that the EU-Russian inter-parliamentary dialogue must be understood and kept as an instrument to deal with concerns and problems in the overall bilateral relationship, to exchange arguments, to promote mutual understanding and to overcome the grown deep distrust, and therefore, being the most appropriate way for creating political abilities to re-establish trust; notes that this instrument is used in relations with many other partners with whom deep differences persist; notes that the inter-parliamentary relations with the Russian Duma have been frozen for over six years, and takes the view that this lack of dialogue has contributed to the deepening of mutual distrust; calls for the restoration of the normal functioning of the inter-parliamentary dialogue between the Russian Duma and Parliament;
 5. Calls on the EU and its Member States to hold themselves, as well as third countries with which they share tighter ideological affinities, to the same standards they demand of Russia concerning democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
 6. Calls on foreign actors and organisations, including the EU and its Member States, to refrain from subverting or interfering in the internal affairs of Russia, including through civil

¹ Electoral Act, 1997 (as amended), Ireland, <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1997/act/25/enacted/en/html>

society associations and NGOs;

7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.