



Plenary sitting

B9-0604/2021

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

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on the 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 its previous resolutions on Russia,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Russian Federation and to the international human rights obligations to which Russia has committed itself as Member of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN), and as signatory of other human rights treaty,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Protocols thereto, in particular Article 10 on the right to freedom of expression and Article 11 on the right to freedom of assembly and association,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Memorial is one of the oldest and most respected human rights organisations in Russia; whereas, for decades, Memorial has stood for a vibrant, humanistic culture of remembrance of the crimes of the Soviet regime against its own people, as well as an active, civic commitment to human rights; whereas, to this day, Memorial makes an invaluable contribution to historical reappraisal, rehabilitation of the politically persecuted and unjustly convicted, and respect for human rights; whereas, in 2009, Memorial was awarded with the Sakharov Prize for the Freedom of Thought by the European Parliament;
- B. whereas Memorial's two legal entities, International Memorial and Memorial Human Rights Centre, are currently under threat of liquidation, with the trials ongoing; whereas prosecutors are charging both entities with a “systematic violation” of the “foreign agents law”, while Memorial Human Rights Centre is also being charged with “justifying terrorism and extremism”;
- C. whereas the lawsuits against Memorial are politically motivated as they aim to further curtail the already shrinking space for civil society and human rights defenders in Russia, and these cases are based on legislation that directly contravenes the freedom of association and right to free speech and expression;
- D. whereas the persecution of Memorial takes place amidst repeated and systematic attempts by the Russian government to rewrite history and curtail free debate about the evaluation of historical crimes and events, especially those connected to the rule of the Soviet governments; whereas authorities have used falsification of historical facts to deny the findings by Memorial Human Rights Center on repression and persecution under Stalin;
- E. whereas fundamental human rights, including freedom of association and freedom of expression, are enshrined in the constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as in numerous international legal instruments, to which Russia has committed itself; whereas the primacy of international law constitutes an obligation for Russia, which cannot be modified or derogated by the recent constitutional changes;

- F. whereas non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a crucial role in modern democratic societies and therefore must keep their independence from any undue interference of public authorities; whereas this decision is the most recent example of the Russian authorities' disregard for a vibrant, politically active and independent civil society and ultimately harms the interests of Russian people and possibilities for open and free dialogue;
- G. whereas the “foreign agents law” has been used by Russian authorities to facilitate the crackdown on independent civil society active in Russia, targeting NGOs, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, as well as women's rights, LGBTIQ+ and environmental activists; whereas the example of Memorial clearly demonstrates how the law is used by the Russian authorities as a tool to silence critics and independent voices;
- H. whereas Russian Federation continuously breaches international law and commitments; whereas legislative restrictions and targeted prosecutions under the law have taken increasingly totalitarian forms in recent months, with the result of severely limiting the freedoms for media and civil society and the space for independent and dissident voices in Russia;
1. Calls on the Russian authorities to immediately drop all charges against Memorial and ensure that Memorial can continue to safely carry out their important work without interference from the state; demands that authorities, in the meantime, preserve all of Memorial's material and immaterial assets, including its archives and works by independent theatres, journalists and artists;
 2. Urges Russian authorities to stop otherwise persecuting Memorial, its staff, and all other NGOs, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, as well as women's rights, LGBTIQ+ and environmental activists in Russia;
 3. Calls on the Presidents of the Commission and the Council, the Vice-President/High Representative, and EU Member States to issue open statements of support with demands to ensure Memorial's safety and their acquittal on all charges; calls on the EU Delegation and Member States' representations in Russia to publicly show solidarity with Memorial;
 4. Urges Russia to repeal the “foreign agents law”, stop creating special legislation or abusing existing criminal or administrative laws with the aim of targeting dissident voices in the country or abroad, and bring its legislation in line with the commitments Russia has voluntarily undertaken under international law and its own Constitution, including fully reinstating freedom of association and expression, as well as media and internet freedom;
 5. Reiterates that the free and independent work of civil society organisations and the media is a cornerstone of a democratic society based on the rule of law; therefore calls on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to increase support for civil society, independent NGOs, human rights defenders, and independent media active in Russia, including sustainable and flexible financial assistance;
 6. Calls on the EU Delegation and national diplomatic representations in Russia to closely monitor the situation and trials linked to Memorial on the ground and to offer them any support that they may need, including direct financial assistance in order to pay lawyers and experts, but also psychosocial and medical support for employees throughout this period of extreme pressure;
 7. Urges the Member States to consider welcoming threatened or banned NGOs from Russia and to allow them to operate from EU territory if needed, as well as to provide emergency visas for Memorial employees and other threatened activists to be able to leave the country and find temporary shelter in the EU;

8. Asks the Council, the EEAS, and the Commission to mainstream human rights and civil society consultation across any dialogues and areas of engagement between the EU, its member states and Russia, as well as live up to their commitment to gender mainstreaming;
9. Urges the HR/VP and the Member States to take coordinated action with like-minded countries to raise awareness and push back against the restrictions of fundamental freedoms and human rights by the Russian authorities, including through high-level and public interventions, coordinated demarches, sustained scrutiny at international and regional human rights fora, as well as regular human rights impact assessments to ensure that engagement with Russia does not undermine human rights objectives and do not directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations; calls for reevaluation of Russia's membership in the Council of Europe, including a possible restriction of the Russian delegation's rights in the PACE;
10. Strongly condemns the falsification of history and historical facts as a means by Russian authorities, the FSB and the "Center for Sociocultural Expertise" to cover up and deny the fate of victims of the Stalin regime, used not only in the actual attempts to liquidate Memorial Human Rights Center, but also for example in the case of the discovery of mass graves in Sandarmoh in Karelian Republic and the subsequent politically fabricated prison sentence of Yury Dmitriev, local leader of Memorial, as well as in the confiscation of the book by Agnes Haikara on the tragic fate of Norwegian and Finnish colonists of the Kola peninsula;
11. 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, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and to the President, Government and the Parliament of the Russian Federation.