



Plenary sitting

B9-0607/2021

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))

Anna Fotyga, Bogdan Rzońca, Ryszard Czarnecki, Ladislav Ilčíć, Hermann Tertsch, Adam Bielan, Roberts Zīle, Dace Melbārde, Angel Dzhambazki, Veronika Vrecionová, Charlie Weimers, Elżbieta Rafalska, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Assita Kanko, Jan Zahradil, Elżbieta Kruk, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Raffaele Fitto
on behalf of the ECR Group

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 its previous resolutions on Russia, in particular of 8 February 2018 on Russia, the case of Oyub Titiev and the Human Rights Centre Memorial;
- having regard to the European Parliament recommendation of 16 September 2021 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the direction of EU-Russia political relations;
- having regard to Resolution 1481 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 26 January 2006 on the need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian Communist regimes,
- having regard to its declaration on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Stalinism and Nazism adopted on 23 September 2008;
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe;
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- 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 Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN),
- having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. Whereas on 8 November 2021 the Russian authorities filed two separate lawsuits seeking the liquidation of Human Rights Center (HRC) Memorial and the International Memorial, accusing them of repeated and persistent violation of the “foreign agents” legislation;

B. Whereas Memorial is the most prominent and oldest civil rights group in Russia, established in the late 1980’s by a group of dissidents, including Andrei Sakharov; whereas by the collapse of Soviet Union in 1990 23 branches of the organization was already active and continued to grow in the Russian Federation;

C. Whereas Memorial with all its branches and affiliated organisations carried out a unprecedented work in documenting the repression carried out by the Soviet regime, building up a database of over three million names of victims; whereas important area of Memorial’s work was uncovering the atrocities committed by Joseph Stalin and countering his myth as great leader, promoted by the authorities during the Soviet times and also in Putin’s Russia;

D. Whereas Memorial has also built an impressive database of over 40 000 officers of USSR internal security forces and documented crimes committed by them; whereas members of Putin's regime, some of whom have professional and family links with the KGB, are trying to whitewash people from this list;

E. Whereas Memorial played an important role in uncovering documents and facts about the 1940 Katyn massacre, a series of mass murders of nearly 22 000 Polish military officers and intelligentsia as well as Augustow Roundup of 1945; whereas members of Memorial even before the organization was officially established had close contacts with "Solidarity" movement in Poland and dissidents in many other satellite states and former Soviet Union republics;

F. Whereas Memorial is one of the last remaining organisations continuing work on human rights in Chechnya, a nearly totalitarian enclave within Russia, where the local Kremlin-sponsored leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has been ruthlessly removing all forms of dissent through brutal repression;

G. Whereas the Russian Federation has adopted a series of repressive laws that have drastically expanded the scope of the individuals and groups that can be designated as 'foreign agents' and have increased the restrictions and requirements imposed on them, along with the sanctions for the violation thereof;

H. Whereas the Russian Federation has already designated numerous international and foreign NGOs as 'undesirable', including US-based International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, National Endowment for Democracy, Atlantic Council, as well as the EU funded European Endowment for Democracy, Association of Schools of Political Studies of the Council of Europe, Ukrainian World Congress and media outlets run by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, among others;

I. Whereas since release by Memorial of list of more than 400 political prisoners in Russia, the pressure on the organization was steadily increasing, including raids of the headquarters in October, as well as threats against its members;

J. Whereas an active civil society sphere is a crucial component of a democratic and open society, as well as for safeguarding human rights and the rule of law;

K. whereas Memorial was awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2009;

1. Strongly condemns opening of the lawsuits against HRC Memorial and the International Memorial and calls on the Russian authorities to immediately drop them; considers these lawsuits to be a politically motivated attack on the most prominent human rights organization in Russia, which also is one of the very few places left where people can openly exchange their opinions, learn about the atrocities committed by the communist regime during the Soviet Union era and monitor appealing human rights track record of the current Russian government; condemns attacks on Memorial workers, volunteers and offices throughout the country;

2. Considers the attack on Memorial as another and possibly final step in Vladimir Putin's campaign to recast Soviet history, tie modern Russia's identity to the former Soviet Union and reintroduce totalitarian form of government;

3. Is strongly concerned that approval of Joseph Stalin among the Russian population has surged to the highest ever level in Vladimir Putin's era, with 70 % of society believing that Stalin played a positive role in Russian history; takes note that is a direct effect of Putin's policy of

‘Stalinisation of mass consciousness’ and repression of independent historians; calls on the EU to ask that Soviet archives are opened to scholars and researchers and that details of the genocidal acts of Stalinists against Russians and other nations of the Soviet Union and its satellite states be made public;

4. Is acutely aware of the Kremlin’s efforts in Russia and some of the former Soviet republics, mainly Georgia, to portray Joseph Stalin as a hero and symbol of Soviet Union’s successes in the World War two and its power during the cold war; strongly condemns such campaign and calls on the European Commission, EEAS, European Endowment for Democracy and other institutions to dedicate substantial attention and financial means to counter this false narrative;

5. Calls on the authorities to end criminal prosecutions against human rights defenders and activists under the law on ‘foreign agents’ and the law on ‘undesirable organisations and to revoke this discriminatory legislation;

6. Finds it very symbolic that Memorial, founded to document political repressions carried out by the Soviet regime during its darkest times, still had to continue doing the same in Vladimir Putin’s Russia, compiling lists of people persecuted or even killed by the state for their political views;

7. Condemns the defamation campaigns waged by current Russian authorities against historians and scholars who openly speak about the crimes committed by the communist regime and uncover direct links between that regime and people currently in power in Russia; moreover, underlines that these persecutions are aimed at hiding a real number of victims and vicious nature of totalitarian post-communist state;

8. Regrets that Russia, which to this day remains the greatest victim of the Soviet communist totalitarianism, is not yet able to come to terms with its gruesome past and instead its authorities are persecuting those who are working to shed light on the Soviet totalitarian crimes;

9. Expresses its utmost respect and support for people risking their freedom and even lives in defense of basic human and civil rights enshrined in the Russian constitution and notoriously violated by the regime;

10. Pays tribute to members of Memorial, such as Natalia Estemirova, who paid the highest price for uncovering atrocities committed by the Russian Federation in Chechnya; remind about others that were killed or closely escaped the death, such as Boris Nemtsov, Anna Politkovskaya, Sergei Protazanov, Alexander Litvinenko, Viktor Yushchenko, Sergei Skripal and Aleksei Navalny;

11. Underlines the need for the EU and Member States to step up support to human rights defenders, civil society, scholars, historians and those defending political and civil freedoms in Russia by rising their profile via meetings at ambassador level or during official visits, supporting them via social media, op-eds and articles in independent Russian and Russian-language channels;

12. Urges the European Council to adopt restrictive measures against those responsible for the arbitrary persecution of Memorial organization and its members; also, reiterates that the EU should stand in full solidarity with Russian civil society and use the European human rights violations sanctions regime to sanction perpetrators of any serious human rights violations; stresses that perpetrators of human rights abuses should neither be granted EU visas nor should they be allowed to keep assets in Member States;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the

governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Presidential Executive Office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Duma.