

STATEMENT AGAINST THE INTENDED CLOSURE OF MEMORIAL

23 November 2021

The undersigning organizations from the fields of historical academic research on Russia, human rights and history education are deeply concerned about the recent announcement by the Russian Office of the Prosecutor General to dissolve the well-known and much-respected civil rights organization and historical society „Memorial International“. The Office charges Memorial with having violated the law against “foreign agents“, an accusation that Memorial has repeatedly rejected.

Memorial was founded in 1987–1989 by Andrei Sakharov and other activists. Since the 1990s it has been central for the documentation of and critical reflection on the history of political persecution in the Soviet period and especially during Stalinism. Its staff carries out research into and educational projects on Stalinist mass persecutions, on the imprisonment and execution of innocent Soviet citizens, on forced labor during Nazi occupation, and on the history of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union. Its databases and archives are invaluable for researchers from around the world. Memorial has also greatly contributed to improving the social situation of victims of repression. Its human rights center in Moscow collects and analyzes information on the human rights situation in Russia and prepares initiatives for conflict resolution. Memorial has received several international awards, among them the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament in 2009.

The dissolution of Memorial would be a heavy blow for historical research as well as educational and human rights work in Russia itself and far beyond.

The undersigned call upon national governments and relevant EU bodies to raise this issue with the Russian authorities as a matter of priority and help defend Memorial.

- Dr. Matthias Neumann, President of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES)
- Centre d'étude des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen (EHESS-CNRS)
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Osteuropakunde (DGO)
- EuroClio
- Dr. John Paul Newman, President of the Irish Association for Russian, Central and East European Studies (IARCEES)
- Mémorial France
- Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)
- Sällskapet för studier av Ryssland, Central- och Östeuropa samt Centralasien
- Société française pour les études russes et est-européennes en sciences sociales (SFERES)
- Venäjän ja Itä-Euroopan Tutkimuksen Seura (FAREES)
- Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands (VHD)
- Verband der Osteuropahistorikerinnen und -historiker (VOH)