

15 November 2021

**Communiqué by the President of the Conference of INGOs  
and the Standing Committee  
concerning the lawsuits against Memorial**

It is with deep concern that have we learned on 11 November that the International Memorial Society, an INGO with participatory status with the Council of Europe, received a letter from Supreme Court of the Russian Federation stating that the Prosecutor General's Office had filed a lawsuit seeking liquidation of International Memorial Society over repeated violations of the country's legislation on "foreign agents." A court date to hear the prosecutor's case is set for 25 November 2021.

On 12 November, the second key entity of Memorial, the Memorial Human Rights Center, received information from the Moscow City Court that the Moscow City Prosecutor's Office filed a similar lawsuit against them, with a preliminary hearing on the lawsuit to be held on 23 November 2021.

According to Memorial, the alleged violations pertain to repeated fines against the organization for failure to mark some of its materials with the discriminatory "foreign agent" label, one of the pernicious requirements of the "foreign agents" law.

Memorial is one of Russia's oldest and most prominent civil society organizations, which stands up for human rights, works to commemorate victims of Soviet repression, and provides a platform for free debate and artistic expression. The threat to dissolve two key entities of Memorial is directed against all of Russia's human rights community.

We quote the statement of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić on this affair: *As the Council of Europe repeatedly indicated, this law stigmatises NGOs, media and individuals and has had a repressive impact on civil society in Russia over recent years. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation has not acted upon the Council of Europe's repeated calls to repeal the Foreign Agents legislation. The liquidation of International Memorial would deal a further devastating blow to civil society, which is an essential pillar of any democracy.*

We urge Russia to repeal this discriminatory legislation. We appeal to the Russian authorities to stop the prosecution of Memorial. We ask all relevant bodies of the Council of Europe for their aid in this matter.

Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs