



## **Liquidation of International Memorial and HRC Memorial: No to Usurpation of the Right to Historical Memory**

### **Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum condemns the decision to liquidate two important Russian civil society organisations, International Memorial<sup>1</sup> and the Human Rights Centre (HRC) Memorial<sup>2</sup>.

The grounds for the liquidation was a lawsuit by the prosecutor's office alleging “systematic” violation of the “foreign agents” legislation. According to the Ministry of Justice and the Moscow prosecutor's office, both organisations failed to label publications on their websites and social media sites as created by a “foreign agent”. At the hearings of the HRC Memorial liquidation, the prosecutor said that the organisation “should be shut down,” adding that “the absence of the foreign agent label on its materials may lead to the formation of a negative image of the country and cause depression among citizens.”<sup>3</sup> In addition, HRC Memorial was also accused of justification of extremism and terrorism<sup>4</sup>.

The process of liquidation of International Memorial and the HRC Memorial was initiated<sup>5</sup> on 11 November 2021, when the Prosecutor General's Office filed a lawsuit to liquidate International Memorial, and the Moscow Prosecutor's Office filed a similar lawsuit against HRC Memorial. The authorities cited “systematic violations of the 'foreign agents' legislation” as the reason.

Memorial International traces its history back to 1987. Andrei Sakharov, the world-renowned scientist and human rights defender, was one of its organisers and the first Council chairman. International Memorial plays an important role in keeping and studying historical memory in Russia, and its member organisation, the Human Rights Centre Memorial, focuses on human rights protection, monitoring political and religious persecution, and supporting political prisoners, migrants, and refugees. The HRC Memorial was labelled a “foreign agent” in 2014, and International Memorial was added to this list in 2016.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum considers the decision to close down two of Russia's most prominent NGOs a continuation of the attack on civil society and an attempt to usurp the right to historical memory. We call Russian authorities to reverse the decisions to liquidate International Memorial and the Human Rights Centre Memorial and to ensure the rights to freedom of thought and to preserve historical memory.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.memo.ru/ru-ru/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/665>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.memo.ru/ru-ru/memorial/departments/intermemorial/news/668>

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-memorial-liquidation-hearing-starts/31623262.html>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://zona.media/news/2021/11/12/memo>

<sup>5</sup> See the CSF Board statement: <https://eu-russia-csf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/StatementForeignAgents12.11.2021-final-1.pdf>

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The **EU-Russia Civil Society Forum** was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 192 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members or supporters of the Forum. It aims at development of cooperation of civil society organisations from Russia and EU and greater participation of NGOs in the EU-Russia dialogue. The Forum has been actively involved, inter alia, in the questions of facilitation of visa regime, development of civic participation, protection of the environment and human rights, dealing with history and civic education.