



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1174
Vienna, 1 February 2018**

**EU Statement on human rights violations concerning the
Memorial Human Rights Centre in Russia**

The EU remains deeply concerned by the arrest and detention of Oyub Titiev, Director of the Memorial Human Rights Centre in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, which we raised at the Permanent Council on 18 January.

Since that statement, Mr Titiev's appeal against his detention was denied, and he remains in custody. We repeat our concerns that the charges against him raise significant doubts, and that it follows a trend of arrests, attacks, intimidations and discrediting of independent journalists and human rights defenders working in Chechnya. The latest series of harassment and attacks against the Memorial group is of particular concern.

We also repeat the concerns raised by ODIHR Director Gísladóttir in her statement of 10 January, about comments by Chechen officials condemning the work of human rights defenders, and her concern over the failure of the authorities to condemn publicly threats of violence against human rights defenders.

We have now seen what happens when such threats are not publicly condemned or properly dealt with by Russian authorities. Not only was the Memorial office in Ingushetia destroyed in an arson attack on 17 January, but a car, belonging to the Dagestan Memorial office, and used by one of the lawyers representing Mr Titiev, was set on fire on 20 January in Dagestan.

Then on 23 January, one of Memorial's representatives in Dagestan received a series of threatening SMS messages, warning that their office would be burned down, with them inside it.

In 1975 at Helsinki, we recognised the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and we confirmed “the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field”. We built upon this foundation in numerous commitments, notably Copenhagen 1990 where we agreed that we would respect

“(10.1) the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to seek, receive and impart freely views and information on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to disseminate and publish such views and information;

The Russian authorities have a responsibility to protect human rights defenders, including representatives of Memorial, from abuse by third parties, and to take proactive steps to promote the full realisation of the rights of human rights defenders, including their right to defend human rights. We are deeply concerned that there were no official statements from the Russian authorities regarding any of these cases.

We therefore ask the Russian delegation:

- What guarantees of a fair trial they offer to Oyub Titiev;
- what steps the Russian authorities are taking to investigate the arson attacks and threats and bring the perpetrators to justice;
- what positive steps they are taking to protect the right of representatives of Memorial as well as human rights defenders operating across the Russian Federation to carry out their work freely.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA, CANADA and AUSTRALIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.