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United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Case of Yuri Dmitriev

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 8, 2020

As noted in our statement last week *On Developments in the Human Dimension*, the United States remains deeply concerned about the ongoing detention of Mr. Yuri Dmitriev. Mr. Dmitriev is a respected historian and Karelia regional leader of the human rights NGO *Memorial*. Mr. Dmitriev was detained in 2016 on spurious charges widely viewed as retaliation for his unyielding commitment to exposing Stalin-era atrocities that contradict the Kremlin's historical narratives. He was acquitted in April 2018 and arrested again in June 2018. In July 2020, Mr. Dmitriev was sentenced to three and a half years in prison. With time served, he would have been released next month. Instead, on September 29, the Karelia Supreme Court increased 64-year-old Dmitriev's sentence to 13 years in a high security prison in a hearing at which Mr. Dmitriev was deprived of a proper defense.

As a historian, Mr. Dmitriev has investigated crimes and researched the fate of those who went missing under Stalin's murderous regime, never to be seen or heard from again. Mr. Dmitriev has spent his life searching for the truth. As Mr. Dmitriev has brought the truth forward, so should we, the OSCE participating States.

The truth is Mr. Dmitriev has done nothing more than shed light on terrible crimes that some would like to be forgotten. The truth is Mr. Dmitriev's case is widely seen as being politically-motivated. The truth is Mr. Dmitriev should be immediately released.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.