

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

RUSSIAN FEDERATION: The Supreme Court rejects the lawsuit filed against the renowned Historical, Educational, Human Rights and Charitable Society “Memorial” (Society “Memorial”)

Geneva-Paris, February 6, 2015 – The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, an OMCT-FIDH joint programme, welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court to reject the complaint filed by the Ministry of Justice against Russian Society “Memorial”.

In a decision dated January 28, 2015, Judge Alla Nazarova rejected the complaint filed against the Society “Memorial” before the Supreme Court on September 24, 2014, by the Ministry of Justice. The latter requested its closure, alleging “infringements” in its organisational structure, which failed to have a clear vertical structure, with headquarters and departments in other region.

Since its foundation in the final years of the Soviet Union, the network “Memorial”, consisting in a number of independent NGOs under the same society, is known for exposing Soviet-era repression, commemorating victims of violations and monitoring the current human rights situation in the Russian Federation and other post-Soviet countries.

“The complaint filed by the Justice Ministry, was a clear attempt to harass and discredit the Society “Memorial”, undermine its tremendous human rights work and expeditiously lead to its closure. It followed years of harassment, in the form of defamation through slandering media campaigns and acts of vandalism targeting the group’s headquarters in Moscow. Russian civil society organisations are facing a deep and systematic clampdown”, said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

Human Rights Center “Memorial” is currently fighting a separate battle against an official move to label it a “foreign agent” under the controversial law targeting NGOs that receive foreign funding. Moreover, under a newly proposed piece of legislation, currently debated in the State Duma of the Russian Federation, foreign organisations would face being labelled as “undesirable” and closure and local NGOs engaged in cooperation with such bodies would face criminal charges.

“While the decision of the Supreme Court dismissing the complaint against the Society “Memorial” should be welcomed, we remain deeply concerned by the constant threats to human rights defenders in the Russian Federation in the context of an ever increasing repressive legal framework and frequent attacks targeting human rights defenders”, said FIDH President Karim Lahidji.

The brutal attack of lawyer **Mourad Magomedov**, who works with the Human Rights Centre Memorial in Daghestan, by five unknown men in Makhachkala, Dagestan which occurred on February 4, 2015, following numerous threats, is yet another example of the violent repression of human rights defenders in Russia.

For more information, please contact:

- **FIDH: Audrey Couprie/Arthur Manet: + 33 (0) 1 43 55 25 18**
- **OMCT: Miguel Martín Zumalacárregui: + 41 (0) 22 809 49 24**