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Russia: At least eight former representatives of International Memorial and Human Rights Centre Memorial targeted with apartment raids

On 21 March 2023, Russian law enforcement authorities raided apartments of at least eight former staff members of **International “Memorial”** and **Human Rights Centre (HRC) “Memorial.”** The raid happened at the apartments of human rights defenders **Oleg Orlov, Yan Rachinskii, Nikita Petrov, Alexandra Polivanova, Alexander Gurianov, Irina Ostrovskaya, Galina Iordanskaya, and Alyona Kozlova.** Since the raids, former staff members brought in for questioning to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation in the Tverskoy District in Moscow. On 21 March 2023, Law enforcement raided the former premises of the building that belonged to the International “Memorial” in Moscow city center. The raids and questionings were sanctioned by the government under the framework of an investigation against “unidentified staff members of Memorial”. The investigation doesn’t clarify which of the two Memorials are targeted under the investigation concerning the “revival of Nazism” - a criminal offence under Article 354.1 Part 2.B of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

[International “Memorial”](#) (The International Historical and Human Rights Society ‘Memorial’) was an association of human rights initiatives founded in 1989 to preserve the societal memory of the severe political persecution in the former Soviet Republics. International “Memorial” conducted research and engaged in educational activities, monitoring and documenting of human rights violations, as well as providing social and legal counselling for refugees, displaced persons, political prisoners, their families, and other discriminated groups. In recognition of its human rights work, International “Memorial” was awarded the Victor Gollancz Prize, the Hermann Kesten Prize, the Pax Christi International award, and Max van der Stoep Award. [Human Rights Centre “Memorial”](#) was a human rights organisation that provided legal assistance to victims of gross human rights violations and was involved in human rights education, research and publications. HRC “Memorial” was particularly active in the North Caucasus and had regional offices in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria. In 2021, both organisations were shut down by the Russian Authorities for alleged systemic violation of the discriminatory “foreign agents” law. In 2022, both “Memorials” were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the award they shared with Ukrainian NGO “Center for Civic Liberties”, and Belarussian human rights defender Ales Belyatskii.

On 21 March 2023, commencing at approximately 6am Moscow time, Russian law enforcement authorities raided apartments of at least eight former staff members of International “Memorial” and Human Rights Center “Memorial;” [Oleg Orlov](#), Nikita Petrov, Alexandra Polivanova, Yan Rachinskii, Alexander Gurianov, Irina Ostrovskaya, Galina Iordanskaya, and Alyona Kozlova. The law enforcement officials prevented lawyers, who arrived on site of the raids to provide legal assistance and to enter the premises that were being raided. The law enforcement personnel seized personal electronics from some of the apartments raided as well as various Memorial-branded paraphernalia, like stickers, and branded face masks. At approximately 11am Moscow time, law enforcement raided the premises of the building that belongs to the International “Memorial” in Moscow city center.

The raids and questionings are sanctioned in the framework of an investigation launched on 3 March 2023, against “unidentified staff members” of “Memorial” concerning the “revival of Nazism” a criminal offence envisioned under Article 354.1 Part 2.B of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Law enforcement claim that the lists of the victims of the Soviet terror that International “Memorial” published as part of its work concerning access to information, contain names of three

men, who could have participated in Nazi crimes on the territory of the Soviet Union. The Investigation claims that International “Memorial” published these names “disregarding historical truth.” However staff members never received any formal communication about the criminal investigation. In December 2021, both International “Memorial” and Human Rights Centre “Memorial” were shut down due to the alleged “repeated violations of the foreign agent law” yet “staff members” of the organisations continue to be harassed and targeted.

Front Line Defenders is gravely concerned about the raids, judicial harassment, and targeting of the former representatives of International “Memorial” and Human Rights Center “Memorial” for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work. The organisation condemns the fact that the human rights defenders were denied access to legal support. Despite many calls, the Russian authorities continue to systemically target human rights defenders and civil society organisations through trumped up charges and bogus lawsuits. Front Line Defenders condemns the Russian governments suppression of all spaces for human rights defenders who remain in the country and its radical and violent interference with defenders’ critical and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders calls upon the Russian authorities to:

1. Immediately end the targeting of human rights defenders and former representatives of International “Memorial” and Human Rights Center “Memorial;”
2. Ensure human rights defenders have access to necessary legal support;
3. Cease judicial harassment of former representatives of International “Memorial” and Human Rights Center “Memorial” for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Russian Federation are able to carry out their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, in line with the Russian Federation’s international human rights obligations and commitments.