Resolution on the continuous crackdown on civil society and human rights defenders in Russia: the case of human rights organisation Memorial

2021/3018(RSP) - 16/12/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 569 votes to 46, with 49 abstentions, a resolution on the continuous crackdown on civil society and human rights defenders in Russia: the case of human rights organisation Memorial.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Memorial is one of the oldest and most respected human rights organisations and an international model for organisations working on the historical remembrance of political repression and the defence of human rights. It has built an impressive database of over 40 000 officers in the Soviet Union internal security forces and has documented crimes committed by them.

Parliament condemned the recent politically motivated attempts by Russian authorities to shut down the two legal entities of the human rights organisation Memorial - International Memorial and the Memorial Human Rights Centre. The persecution of Memorial comes amid repeated and systematic attempts by the Russian Government to rewrite history and curtail free debate about the evaluation of historical crimes and events, especially those connected to the rule of the Soviet governments.

In this respect, the Russian authorities are called on to:

- immediately **drop all charges** against Memorial and ensure that Memorial can continue to safely carry out their important work without interference from the state;

- **stop persecuting** Memorial, its staff, and all other NGOs, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, scholars, historians, women's rights and LGBTIQ+ rights activists and environmental activists in Russia;

- establish a clear **legal framework** and a safe working environment for civil society in line with international human rights standards;

- stop the ongoing crackdown on civil society, human rights defenders and independent media by **repealing the 'foreign agents' and 'undesirable organisations' laws**;

- ensure that restitution and reparation measures are put in place to address the violations committed in the process of implementing the 'foreign agents' and 'undesirable organisations' laws.

Parliament called on the VP/HR to impose **sanctions** under the EU global human rights sanctions regime on Russian officials involved in the unlawful repression of Memorial and in the judicial proceedings against its organisations and members. The Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Member States are urged to increase support for civil society, independent NGOs, human rights defenders, historians and independent media outlets active in Russia, including sustainable and flexible financial support and emergency assistance, and to encourage greater international support for these actors and their broader inclusion in international civil society networks.

Member States are also urged to consider providing **refuge** for threatened or banned NGOs from Russia and to allow them to operate from EU territory if needed, and to provide emergency visas for Memorial employees and other threatened activists so that they can leave Russia and find temporary shelter in the EU.

Lastly, Parliament suggested that coordinated action with like-minded countries should be taken to increase international scrutiny of Russia’s restrictive laws, policies and actions.