

Detention of Yuri Dmitriev in the Russian Federation: UK statement

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the ongoing detention of Mr Yuri Dmitriev, prominent historian and Head of Memorial's Karelia branch. We call for his release from pre-trial detention as an immediate first step.

The persecution of Mr Dmitriev began in December 2016, when he was detained in relation to his possession of nine photographs of his daughter. Acquitted in April 2018 of deeply questionable charges of child pornography, Mr Dmitriev was regrettably again remanded into custody in June 2018.

On 7 May, the Karelia Supreme Court upheld a lower Court's decision to prolong the detention of Yuri Dmitriev until 25 June 2020.

As has been previously stated at the Permanent Council, the case against Mr Dmitriev was widely seen as a politically-motivated prosecution, linked to his work as a historian and representative of Memorial, who has dedicated his life to investigating crimes committed during the Stalinist era. He has worked tirelessly over three decades to document mass graves in the Karelia region of North-West Russia and identify the individual victims within them. His arrest, in December 2016 came two months after the International Memorial Society was included on the register of "foreign agents" by the Russian authorities, and one month after Russian state media accused Memorial of helping – quote – "those who aim to destroy the Russian state". – unquote

No-one should be targeted as a result of their work to document and establish the truth about historical human rights violations.

We remind the Russian Federation of their OSCE commitments on Human Rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. In particular, we highlight the extensive OSCE commitments made in Copenhagen in 1990, including the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial; the reaffirmation of those commitments in the 1991 Moscow Document; and the Ljubljana Decision of 2005 on Upholding Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Criminal Justice Systems.

We also remind the Russian Federation of their commitments, freely entered into, in Helsinki in 1975 and in Copenhagen in 1990, to ensure "the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field" and "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 Federation has a responsibility to protect human rights defenders and to ensure that all individuals in the Russian Federation are able to know and act upon their rights. We reiterate our call for the immediate release of Yuri Dmitriev.