

Statement by International Society “Memorial” on the Law on “Foreign Agents”

On November 20 the federal law on “Amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation pertaining to the regulation of the activity of non-profit organisations, which perform the function of a foreign agent” will come into effect.

The law is illegal and amoral by its very nature. Illegal - because it gives the executive prerogative of the judicial - and amoral, because it a priori implies, that organisations, which get funded from abroad, act on the orders of their sponsors and condenses superior state wisdom in the cheap criminal aphorism: “He who pays the piper, calls the tune.”

In conformity with this law, International Society “Memorial” and all other civic organisations that get donations from abroad can now at any time be requested to put themselves on the list of “organisations - foreign agents” that act on the territory of Russia, as well as having to put the according brand on books released by us and on our internet sites. In other words: we ourselves should recognize that we are an organization acting on behalf of some unknown foreign forces.

These claims are a deliberate lie. But it's not just about that. “Memorial”, as an organisation, that works with historical memories, is obliged to remember and also remind the public, that not too long ago in a national history campaign on “foreign agents” allegedly operating in our country, not once served the propagandistic support for state terror and the persecution of dissidents.

It is enough to simply remember the years 1937 to 1938, when hundreds of thousand of people also got coerced into calling themselves “foreign agents” and in more recent times critics of the regime were often declared “hirelings of the West”. Not to mention the fact, that the corruption of the national consciousness with cheka tales on “foreign agents” is a proven way to get away from the real solutions of social problems.

“Memorial” is not going to take part in this action that is aimed at the destruction of the Russian civil society and won't knowingly distribute false information about itself. If they demand from “Memorial” to be put on the list of “foreign agents,” then we will resist - first of all in court. We are a human rights organisation and we will do everything to protect the rule of law by relying on that very law.

We do not claim that this is the only way possible. It's up to every organization to decide how it will respond to this absurd law. The power of civil society can be shown not only in the unity of actions, but also in their diversity.

Of course, in all cases, the natural norm of action is mutual solidarity and support for those organisations that will face difficulties after November 20.

We do believe, that in the end the calm and persistence of the Russian civil society will be stronger than the sick fantasies of our legislators.

Board of International Society “Memorial”

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