



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Raid on Memorial in St. Petersburg

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 11, 2008

Mr. Chairman

My delegation shares the concerns just expressed by the European Union about the raid by Russian law enforcement officers on the research center operated by Memorial in St. Petersburg last week.

Memorial is a respected non-governmental organization dedicated to remembering the victims of totalitarian repression, and the historical documents and information in its archives are invaluable sources for historians and social scientists worldwide. It is vital to permit their important work to continue without hindrance. We urge the Russian authorities to ensure the speedy and safe return of all seized equipment and archival material. Civil society organizations such as the Memorial research center play a critical role in the development of democratic societies and the promotion of human rights.

Unfortunately, this action against Memorial is not an isolated instance of pressure against freedom of association and expression in Russia. In the past few weeks alone, there have been reports of harassment against media and other civil society organizations. It is imperative that these organizations and individuals be allowed to function and flourish, free of political pressure, intimidation, harassment, or restrictions, as called for in OSCE commitments.

Thank you.