

October 20, 2020

Anatoly Vladimirovich Nakvas
Chairman of the Supreme Court of Karelia
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Dear Chairman of the Supreme Court of Karelia:

The American Historical Association expresses grave concern for Yuri Dmitriev, a Russian historian whose 3 ½ year prison term was, in September 2020, extended for another 9 ½ years by the Karelian Supreme Court for what the Delegation of the European Union to Russia has [referred](#) to as “unsubstantiated” charges “triggered by his human rights work and his research on political repression in the Soviet period.” The verdict of the Karelian Supreme Court, which convened in private and without legal representation for Mr. Dmitriev, “cannot be deemed to have complied with fair trial guarantees,” [according](#) to the Commissioner for Human Rights for the Council of Europe. Mr. Dmitriev will serve the remainder of his sentence in a high-security penitentiary.

Both the EU Delegation and the Council of Europe, of which the Russian Federation is a member, have concluded that Mr. Dmitriev’s prosecution was triggered by his historical research on political repression in the Soviet period as well as other human rights work tied to Memorial, a highly regarded human rights organization operating in post-Soviet states.

The nonviolent exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and conscience is expressly protected under international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The EU Delegation also noted a broader concern that “this unjust verdict contributes to a worsening of the human rights situation and shrinking space for civil society and independent voices in Russia.”

The American Historical Association is the largest organization of professional historians in the world, with approximately 11,500 members spanning the globe. On behalf of this international network of scholars, we respectfully urge the Supreme Court of Karelia to order the release of Mr. Dmitriev.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Mary Lindemann
President, 2020



James Grossman
Executive Director