

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Russian Federation: Raid on an independent research centre should be investigated**

Amnesty International is calling for a full investigation into the legality of a raid yesterday by law enforcement officers at the office of an independent research and information centre in St Petersburg, amid concerns that serious violations of Russian law were committed during the process.

Amnesty International considers this raid with its violations to be a further indication of the climate of harassment faced by civil society and human rights defenders in Russia. As the organization pointed out in its report *Russian Federation: Freedom Limited – the right to freedom of expression in the Russian Federation*, EUR 46/008/2008, published on 26 February 2008, there appear to be more and more limitations on the right to freedom of expression, as well as the rights to freedom of assembly and association in the Russian Federation. The space for dissenting views, independent media and independent organizations to operate is shrinking.

The Research and Information Centre Memorial was established by the human rights organization Memorial and investigates human rights violations committed during the time of the Soviet Union, including those committed in Stalin's GULAG.

Masked officers of Investigatory Committee of St Petersburg Prosecutor's office armed with truncheons raided Memorial and seized all computer hardware and other materials containing the files of thousands of people who had been repressed during the Soviet regime. In violation of the Russian Criminal Procedure Code no record of the seized items or the content of hard drives was made and the lawyer was not allowed in the premises. The search was conducted without attesting witnesses and the Memorial representative was not given the record of the search to familiarize themselves with it.

The officers claimed the search was in connection with an article allegedly of an extremist nature published in a newspaper in St. Petersburg, which is currently under criminal investigation. Representatives of the research centre denied any connection with the newspaper or the author of the article in question.

Representatives of the centre underline that the seized materials are of great research and historical value and are concerned that valuable information may be lost.

Public Document

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