

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues!

I am grateful for this opportunity to appeal to you, like-minded people who recognize the importance of continuous, daily work to promote respect for the human rights set down in the Helsinki Accords.

Each one of us defends these rights and freedoms in our own countries by relying on our understanding of the tasks at hand. For me personally, these tasks developed more than thirty years ago from a bizarre interweaving of several fundamental rights:

The right to an honest name

The right to a fair trial

The right to a grave (if not buried at sea)

The right to memory

The right to receive and impart information

Over the years, and to the best of my abilities, I have restored the name and good reputation of many victims of communist repression that was carried out in my country in the previous century. I searched, found and converted these places into memorials to victims of political repression. I returned to living people from different countries the names and memory of their relatives and friends, who had disappeared in the darkness of communist times. I told them about their fates, about their tragic deaths, and about their burial locations. I wrote books to keep their memory alive.

We were under the impression that these awful times were behind us. But those who claim that history is circular turned out to be right. In Russia, the repressive system has been reactivated. Once again, people who disagree with the authorities' current political direction are arrested and imprisoned. The pretext for the arrest is once again reasons constructed by the terrified authorities. Newspapers and periodicals, as well as television and Internet publications, are once again being closed at the request of the government in my country. More and more people are being forced to flee the country, fearful for their lives and the lives of their children, family and loved ones.

No matter how difficult the human rights situation currently is in our country, we are convinced that our efforts are not in vain.

We understand that the entire international community is following developments in Russia with great concern.

The usurpation of absolute power by one person, a puppet parliament, tame prosecutors and courts – this is not a place where human rights prevail.

There are people who are fighting for these rights. Soon, my compatriot Dmitry Muratov will receive humanity's highest award in Oslo – the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, another Russian name rings out in this city – Yuri Dmitriev.

This means that not everything is as hopeless and pessimistic as may appear in Russia. I believe that Russia will be free and democratic. A country where human rights will no longer be in need of protection. Russia will be a state in which human rights are respected, unconditionally.

Thank you for appreciating my work so highly. I will continue to work on the return of names, the restoration of our tragic history, and enlightenment as much as possible in my current condition.

Yuriy Dmitriev

October 17, 2021

Detention Center # 1, Petrozovodsk city