

ADC Memorial Brussels

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**Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial**

**Consultations of the UN CERD with Civil Society**

**November 24, 2016**

**1. What are the key challenges and issues of racial discrimination in your country/region today and how do you work to address them?**

In the ex-Soviet region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia the problem of racism should be named as a key one. Speaking about Russia, ADC Memorial would like to mention the following concerns:

* No engagement of state institutions into pro-active actions on improvement of the situation of Roma, absence of pro-active state policy on Roma; on the contrary – in Russia in 2016 took place demolitions and forced evictions of Romani settlements; no state efforts have been taken in order to overcome segregation of “Roma classes” and Roma schools” practiced in many regions of Russia; repressive approach to Roma settlements existing for decades, in 2016 demolitions and forced evictions took place;
* Recently, increased criminalization of peaceful protests of indigenous peoples representatives who rose their voices against aggressive policy of extracting companies, often affiliated to state officials;
* State repressions towards leaders and activists – members of Medjlis of Crimean Tatars, self-government body not recognizing the annexation of Crimea;
* Collapse of civil society due to repressive legislation (i.e. the law on NGOs – “foreign agents”), especially in the sector of NGOs working on minority issues, the rights of indigenous peoples, Roma rights; Human Rights agenda is being replaced by the state idea on “civil nation of the Russian Federation”, that can likely lead to violations of minorities’ rights.

**2. What has been your experience, as civil society, of engaging with CERD to date?**

ADC Memorial for many years cooperates with the CERD submitting shadow reports on implementation of the respective Convention in Russia (2008, 2013) and in Ukraine (2016), focusing on the situation of Roma, indigenous peoples, Crimean Tartars, visual minorities – victims of hate crimes and hate speech. Follow-up conclusions on implementation of the recommendations of the CERD were also prepared.

ADC Memorial was one of the first NGOs in Russia repressed by the state precisely for its advocacy cooperation with the UN bodies, including CERD.

**3. How can the CERD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society, and its work on racial discrimination for greater impact on the ground?**

ADC Memorial would propose the following points to better target the issue of racial discrimination in Russia and – wider – in the ex-Soviet region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia:

* Actively react on the cases of reprisals of NGOs and experts/activists related to their cooperation with the CERD and other UN bodies, communicate with the official representations of the respective countries in the UN, develop Special Procedure on the issues of reprisals in order to carry out the communication to the states;
* Observe the possibility of collective complaints to the CERD on cases of violation of the rights of minorities/indigenous people, as such rights are collective and are covered by the Convention.