

# Transformation Literacy Conference

GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURES WITH

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Deutschland e.V.



Friday, 28 April 2023 2:00 - 4:00PM CET

**"Civil society structures and governance  
in the context of repressive regimes"**





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# **Civil society structures and governance in the context of repressive regimes**

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Dr. Anke Giesen

# What are Memorial's aims?



- **Promote mature civil society and democracy based on the rule of law** and thus to prevent a return to totalitarianism in the countries of former soviet influence
  - **Assist formation of public consciousness based on the values of democracy and law**, to get rid of totalitarian patterns, and to establish firmly human rights in practical politics and in public life
  - **Promote the revelation of the truth about the historical past** and perpetuate the memory of the victims of political repression exercised by totalitarian regimes.
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# What does Memorial do?



- **Keeps electronic databases of the victims and the perpetrators of political terror in the USSR.**
  - **Organizes assistance, both legal and financial, for the former and current victims of political repression.**
  - **Conducts research into the history of political repression and publicizes** the findings in books, articles, exhibitions, museums, and websites of its member organizations.
  - **Organizes conferences, seminars, summer schools, expeditions and city walks** to inform people on the history of political repression.
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# Memorial: 1987 - present



- **1987, August.** An initiative group emerges in Moscow, *The Group for the Preservation of the Memory of Soviet Repression Victims, or Memorial*. Similar groups spring in other regions of the then Soviet Union.
  - **1989, January 28–30.** The Founding Conference, *All-Union Voluntary History and Education Society Memorial*.
  - **In 2020 there were**
    - about 60 groups in Russia
    - 6 in Ukraine
    - 1 in the Czech Republic
    - 1 in Germany
    - 1 in Italy
    - 1 in Belgium
    - 1 in France
  - **2022, December 10.** One of three winners of the Nobel Peace Prize
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# Challenges



- **Russian Foreign Agent Law** (November 2012)  
Attacks by pro-regime NGOs and GONGOs  
Defamation by state controlled media
  - **Legal prosecution** of certain activists based on counterfeit exhibits (Oyub Titiev, Jurij Dmitriev) in Karelia and Chechnya
  - **Liquidation by court of the umbrella organization** and a member organization in December 2021 in Moscow
  - **Start of the Russian war** of aggression against Ukraine, adoption of numerous censorship laws.
  - **Confirmation of the judgment** in March 2022
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# What to do in such a situation?



- Just continuing the **work**
  - High **commitment** to organizational goals and beliefs
  - Having an **organization in reserve**
  - **Encrypted communication**
  - **Collective decision processes**
  - **Helping activists**, who want to go into exile
  - **Tolerance for people**, who are too scared to continue working
  - **Not to be surprised about conflicts** between the staying ones and the leaving ones
  - **Understanding, compassion and support for activists** from safe countries in relation to those in unsafe political situations
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# Prospects



- Foundation of a **new international umbrella organization** in May 2023
  - **Three new organizations** by exiled activists were already founded
  - **Entering into new cooperations** with organizations from Non-Russian countries
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