The Human Rights Centre "Memorial"

Annual Report 2009
**Russia:**

- Astrakhan
- Belgorod
- Bryansk
- Vladikavkaz
- Vladivostok
- Volgograd
- Volgograd
- Voronezh
- Grozny
- Gudermes
- Ekaterinburg
- Ivanovo
- Izhevsk
- Kazan
- Kaliningrad
- Kaluga
- Kolomna
- Kirov
- Krasnodar
- Krymsk
- Kurgan
- Lipetsk
- Moscow
- Nizhny Novgorod
- Nizhny Novgorod
- Omsk
- Orenburg
- Orel-1
- Orel-2
- Ocher
- Penza
- Perm
- Plyus
- Pyatigorsk
- Rostov-on-Don
- Ryazan
- Saint-Petersburg
- Samara
- Saratov
- Sverdlovsk
- Smolensk
- Stavropol
- Taganrog
- Tambov
- Tver
- Ulyanovsk
- Urus-Martan
- Ufa
- Khabarovsk
- Chelyabinsk
- Shakhty

**Post-Soviet space:**

- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan
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Memorial in 2009. The appeal of the Chairman of the Human Rights Centre Board

2009 was a very hard year for Memorial. The murder of the HRC member in Chechnya Natalia Estemirova on July 15, 2009, who was the life and soul of the organization, made an awful strike at us.

Being afraid of our colleagues’ lives we were forced to suspend our work in Chechnya. However on December 16 we declared our return to Chechnya. It was the decision of the HRC colleagues. Moreover, we secured the backing from many international and Russian non-governmental organizations. In the situation when the pressure of authorities gains strength and the work of independent human rights defenders is treated as terrorist activity we can struggle against human rights violation in the republic only in collaboration.

In December European Parliament’s Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded to Memorial and Russian human rights community. We are certainly pleased to receive this honorable award, but at the same time we experience bitter feelings seeing that the situation in Russia is developing in a wrong way, which we wouldn’t like to. Besides, we kept in mind that in 2004 Natalia Estemirova and Sergey Kovalev were nominated for Sakharov prize. Another worthy candidate received the prize then. Several years passed – we received the award this year and Natalia received a deadly bullet...

After my statement on the President of the Republic of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov’s political guilt in Natasha Estemirova’s assassination, Kadyrov initiated civil proceedings on protection of his honor, dignity, professional reputation and demanded compensation for moral damage. The lawsuit was partially satisfied. Meanwhile, I dare to state that we gained a moral victory in this case. We managed to introduce our evidences, argue our position, and achieve a broad discussion over a difficult human rights situation in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov’s guilt in Natasha’s assassination, status of non-governmental organizations in the Chechen Republic.

Criminal case that was started in July is still being investigated. In spite of Kadyrov’s public statement to recall all the writs the case was not closed. Now the investigation is under the governmental control and Kadyrov’s statement is mere words.

2009 is the first year of Russia after Putin’s government. Now our country faces the alternative: either it can roll down lower and lower in the direction of authoritarianism and partially totalitarianism when the human rights are hardly to be observed or this process can be stopped, and may be reversed. This is a core issue which troubles many people now. In 2009 “Memorial” bent its every effort to change the negative trend which had existed all the previous years. Our criticism and our approval (unfortunately, very moderate due to objective cause) of government actions were aimed at changing the situation for the better. Did we succeed? Not, yet. New authorities’ promises and fine words of human rights stay mere words. But we want these promises to come true. Hence follow all our protest meetings, authorities condemnation and at the same time collaboration with the authorities.

I should mark that the Memorial manages to gain a certain beneficial effect which resulted in releasing illegally detained and abducted persons, cessation of torture use, public access to the information about unlawful acts being committed in the North Caucasus, other Russian regions and Central Asia.

The Memorial provides only reliable information. Recommendations that we make help Russian citizens prosecuted in their country of origin to win asylum in other countries. Meetings held by the Centre help to spread the information about human rights violation beyond the boundary of the Russian Federation.

The lawyers of the Memorial-EHRAC lodge complaints of Russian citizens to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and win cases.

We obtain certain beneficial effects, individual victories, but unfortunately we still didn’t achieve system changes in 2009. Nevertheless, we hope that the data and analysis we provide, our appeals to the European Court of Human Rights and other actions towards human rights defence along with the activity of other independent non-governmental organizations will contribute to system changes.

Oleg Orlov
Brief overview of the Human Rights Centre

The Human Rights Centre Memorial is a self-governed non-commercial civil organization, which members are united by humanistic and moral principles, aspiration to assist with human rights defense and formation of people’s civil dignity. The Centre is created and functioning within the Historical-Enlightenment, Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial which was found and works in compliance with international law regulations, legislation of the Russian Federation and its own Charter.

The Human Rights Centre’s mission is to promote general respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms both in the Russian Federation and in other states. The Centre pays a special attention to the most serious and massive violations of these very rights and freedoms. The HRC Memorial has a vast experience of work in human rights defense in Russia.

The HRC Memorial sets the following aims and tasks: observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms execution, giving publicity and diffusion of reliable information about considerable violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms; attracting the attention of the public governmental and international institutions to these kind of violations; conducting and support of researches aimed at human rights massive violation study; assistance with human rights observance; theoretical and practical enlightenment of human rights and humanitarian law.

The following functions are carried out within the scope of these programs:
• Revelation and fixation of the human rights violation facts;
• Diffusion the information about human rights violation – e-mail distribution of news releases, news on the site, press conferences, reports publication, distribution of books, etc.;
• Legal advices for citizens whose rights are violated;
• Criminal and civil cases conduct on domestic and international levels;
• Preparation of reports, reviews;
• Provision of analytical materials at Russian and international meetings, elaboration of recommendations for public authorities.

The HRC Memorial has eight programs functioning within its frameworks:
• Information and Analytical Centre “Hot spots”;
• Network “Migration and Law”;
• Information and Analytical Program “Ethnic discrimination in the Russian Federation”;
• False Accusations of Cases on Islamic Extremism in Russia;
• Monitoring Human Rights Violations in Central Asia;
• Political Prisoners in Contemporary Russia;
• Human Rights Protection Through International Mechanisms (European Court, UNO);
• Harmonization of inter-ethnic relations through the creation of small business in the Prigorodny District of North Ossetia-Alania.

The Human Rights Centre Memorial is governed by the Board elected by the Centre’s members. The Board elects its Chairman and appoints the Executive Director.

1. Vakhninia Lyudmila Vsevolodovna – member of the working group on updating the Centre’s Charter, the member of the Expert Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights, head of the project “Civic initiatives aimed at the enhancement of recruit and contract military men legal status”, PhD, Biology
2. Gannushkina Svetlana Alekseevna – member of the Board of HRC Memorial, head of the Migration and Law Network, chair of the Civic Assistance Committee, member of the Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation, member of the Government Commission of migration policy, member of the Expert Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights
3. Grushkin Dmitry Valeriyevich – PhD, History, employee of the HRC Memorial, head of the program “Domestic Violence in Contemporary Russia”, member of the Writers’ Union of Russia, coordinator of Solidarity Union with political prisoners, member of the Political Council of the Moscow department of the United Democratic Movement “Solidarity”
4. Karetikova Anna Georgievna – head of the program “Political Prisoners in Contemporary Russia”, member of the Writers’ Union of Russia, coordinator of Solidarity Union with political prisoners, member of the Political Council of the Moscow department of the United Democratic Movement “Solidarity”
5. Kogan-Vasny Victor Petrovich – chairman of the non-governmental organization “Regional civic initiative – right to life and civil dignity”
6. Lavut Alexander Petrovich – member of Moscow Memorial Board, member of the Andrei Sakharov Museum and Public Centre Board
7. Orlov Oleg Petrovich – head of the program “Political Prisoners in Contemporary Russia”, member of the Expert Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights, member of the Board of the international non-governmental organization “International Historical-Enlightenment Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial”
8. Ponomarev Vitaly Anatolievich – head of the programs “Monitoring Human Rights Violation in Central Asia” and “False Accusations of Islamic Extremism in Russia”
9. Rachinsky Yan Zbignevich – member of the Board of the international non-governmental organization “International Historical-Enlightenment Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial”, co-chairman of Moscow Memorial
10. Soboleva Daria Borisovna – employee of the “Hot spots” program, employee of Human Rights Centre archive, secretary of the organizing committee “Russian Alternatives”
11. Sokolov Alexander Victorovich – PhD, History, employee of the HRC Memorial, head of the program “Domestic Violence in Contemporary Russia”, member of the Expert Council under the Commissioner for Human Rights, member of the Board of the international non-governmental organization “International Historical-Enlightenment Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial”
14. Cherkasov Alexander Vladimirovich – member of the Board of the international non-governmental organization “International Historical-Enlightenment Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial”, co-chairman of Moscow Memorial
15. Soboleva Darina Borisovna – employee of the “Hot spots” program, employee of Human Rights Centre archive, secretary of the organizing committee “Russian Alternatives”
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This is one of the first HRC Memorial programs that began in 1991. During the past years the officers worked in many “hot spots” which sprung up on the territory of the former Soviet Union: Nagorny-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia-South Ossetia, Tajikistan, Moldova- Pridnestrovie, and the North Caucasus. Currently the program is focused in the North Caucasus.

The aims of the program:
• To assist with conflict resolution in the North Caucasus;
• To reduce the level of violence in this region;
• To counteract to the use of conflicts in the North Caucasus for the sake of strengthening authoritarian and antidemocratic trends in the Russian Federation;
• To fight against lawlessness and human rights violation in the course of counter-terrorism activities of the State;

To achieve these aims the HRC Memorial takes the following actions:
• Provides the information about human rights violations in the regions of the North Caucasus to the Russian authorities, Russian and international community, politicians, mass media, international organizations;
• Provides the information about criminal cases falsification with respect to terrorist crimes.
• Uses national mechanisms of human rights defense, strives for its effectiveness.
• Uses the European Court of Human Rights to provoke Russian national legal mechanism of human rights defense to work more effectively.

The program has a number of projects:
• “Information and Analytical Centre on the North Caucasus matters” monitors, analyzes and generalizes data on the human rights situation in the Chechen Republic, the Republic of Ingushetia, Progorody District of North Osetia-Alania, the Republic of Dagestan, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. The results of the monitoring are placed on the HRC Memorial site. News reports (“Chronicle of violence”) is diffused monthly to the media, non-governmental and international organizations. More than 15,000 announcements have been placed in a special section of the HRC Memorial site.

The project “Struggle against criminal cases falsification in the North Caucasus.” In Russia, primarily in the North Caucasus, falsifications are widespread in cases involving violent actions against the authorities such as terrorist crimes, participation in illegal armed units, possession of weapons. At the same time confessions are extracted through the use of torture.

A consolidated group of lawyers from a number of regions was created to put an end to this practice. The lawyers are involved in cases in which there are serious reasons to suspect the presence of falsification and torture use. The course of preliminary investigations and court hearings are regularly covered in the materials of the HRC Memorial. The publications are disseminated in the media.

The last project is “Database creation on the persons abducted in the conflict zone of the North Caucasus”. The Human Rights Centre Memorial maintains the base on abducted persons on the territory of the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia, including Dagestan since 2007. The base is replenished with information about abducted, detained, arrested and missing people. Unfortunately, in most cases people vanish completely, probably by being executed. However, it sometimes happens that missing people had been released by the abductors (after several days or months of detention). Bodies of abducted people with visible signs of tortures were also found by the natives.

With respect to every case we know, the HRC Memorial corresponds with the prosecutor’s office demanding to initiate criminal proceedings, and observing the course of the investigation.

Legal support is introduced to:
• refugees and forced migrants who have official status;
• persons who submit a petition for asylum, the status of refugee or forced migrant;
• persons who are refused to provide the status, examine the case or accept the documents;
• persons who migrated inland (VPL): victims of military or ethnic conflicts;
• persons without citizenship (LBG), first of all the citizens of former Soviet Union;
• persons who were admitted to lose the status or deprive it;
• labor migrants from regions with difficult economic situation.

The concrete objective of legal support is just part of a more general and perspective objective: to provide the conditions for a good integration of migrants into society, achieve problem resolutions on the basis of generally recognized legal standards, eliminate discriminatory approach and arbitrariness on the part of officials of all levels.

For the beginning of 2009 the Network “Migration and Law” grasped 41 regions of Russia where more than 80% of all the forced migrants lived. The general number of the Network’s offices is 49. First of all legal support is provided for the regions bordering the territories which have become a constant source of migration. Professional lawyers, including experienced attorneys are working for the Network.

The Network’s coordination Centre is situated in Moscow.

In 2009 under the project of the Network “Legal consulting of refuge seeking persons, refugees, persons without citizenship and persons of other categories who are in the domain of competence of UNHCR in Moscow and other regions of the Russian Federation” the following support was provided:
- in the form of legal consulting in number of 17,159;
- 1764 suits, complaints and statements to courts, Public Prosecutor’s Office and other law-enforcement authorities were executed;
- 1157 appeals were sent to Federal Migration Service, Department on Migration, Passport and Visa department, Department of Visas and Registration and Commission on Citizenship;
- 1343 appeals were sent to administrative authorities and other institutions;
- in 688 cases another kind of aid was provided, including social aid;
- support for refugees and forced migrants in court was provided in 1022 cases.

A better part of appeals to judicial authorities comprises complaints against refusal by migration services to provide a temporary asylum on the territory of the RF and the refugee status for foreign residents; defense from persecution; assistance with civil status registration, housing problems settlements, assistance with social security and employment.

Under the Network’s project “Legal consulting of inland migrants in Ingushetia and Chechnya” reception rooms worked in Nazran, Grozny, Urus-Martan, Gudermes and Sernovodsk in 2009. The representatives of the Network were working with inland migrants (VPL) in Achkhoi-Martanovsky and Sunzhensky districts.

Within the frameworks of this project the legal support was introduced:
- in the form of legal consulting in number of 2532;
- 1018 lawsuits, complaints and appeals were executed;
- 313 statements were sent to Public Prosecutor’s Office and law-enforcement authorities; 19 appeals were sent to FMS, UPDM and PVU;
- 376 appeals were sent to administrative authorities and other institutions;
- 127 cases of defense and support in courts.
The program was a continuation of investigations into the plight of Meskhetian Turks in Krasnodarsky Krai, conducted in 1994-1995 with the support of the Human Rights Centre Memorial. Later on more widespread investigations of the problems of discrimination in Russia were started. Some projects are being realized in collaboration with other NGOs – the Centre “The lawyers for constitutional rights and freedoms” (URIKS), the Centre “Sova”, the Democracy and Human Rights Development Centre, Youth Human Rights Movement for tolerance “Etnika” and others.

The main activities of the program:

• Preparation of analytical materials, including alternative reports of NGOs for international organizations. Three alternative reports were prepared during the functioning of the program. Two of them for UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2002 and 2008) and one for Council of Europe (2006) on the execution of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Russia. In 2009 the head of the program delivered seven public reports and lectures concerning the problems of counteraction to discrimination; four articles and one brochure on this problem were published;

• Study of existing legal mechanisms for counteraction to ethnic discrimination in Russia. Studies of inner legal mechanisms were held in collaboration with other NGOs. The work began with the issue of the report “Legal mechanisms of the counteraction to ethnic discrimination and fomenting ethnic hatred in Russia, the possibilities of its use and the level of its effectiveness” (2002). Curriculum, training aids and three volumes of reading-book for students concerning the counteraction of discrimination were published under the auspices of the Centre “The lawyers for constitutional rights and freedoms”, work on the manual continues. Currently within the frameworks of the URIKS Centre’s project the conception of legislative initiative aimed at adoption of Antidiscrimination Legislation in Russia is being elaborated;

• Elaboration of the mechanisms dedicated to interaction of human rights organizations and ethnic minorities for the sake of legal support and discrimination monitoring;

• The project “Legal support and assistance with public defense of ethnic minorities in Krasnodarsky Krai” has been in effect in Krasnodarsky Krai since 2003 (currently with the support of the Open Society Institute, in 2007-2009 with the support of the European Commission as well). The project is aimed at perfecting the interaction between ethnic communities (in this instance kurds, hemshils and ezids), practicing lawyers and human rights defenders concerning legal assistance to concrete applicants, monitoring of the situation and training programs for activists. Approximately 470 legal advices were given, mainly in Krasnodarsky Krai; the project’s lawyers within the frameworks of the program represented 311 people in courts, and 176 cases won; some of the cases are still being examined.

The program has existed since June, 1996. The basic aims are gathering, processing and distributing information concerning discrimination on the basis of ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic identity, the incitement to discriminate, and the factors contributing to these phenomena in the various subjects of the RF.
In Uzbekistan the list of people prosecuted for political or religious reasons has grown constantly since 1999. Currently the list contains information on over 6000 people who have been prosecuted since 1997, and a further 1000 people are listed as wanted by the authorities. Our archive holds over 20,000 pages of Uzbek-language documents, including 800 court verdicts on criminal cases. Many of them have been translated into Russian. In 2009 we began uploading these documents onto Memorial’s website.

Since 2005 the program has been monitoring cases concerning detention following extradition requests, as well as the deportation and abduction of Uzbek refugees, in countries including Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey.

HRC Memorial’s program has been monitoring the situation in Turkmenistan (one of the most closed countries in the CIS) for more than ten years, maintaining contacts with local civil society activists. The 2003 OSCE Rapporteur’s Report on Turkmenistan (within the framework of The Moscow Mechanism) included many statements referencing HRC Memorial’s research. From 2002 to 2010 the head of the Central Asia program participated in conferences, briefings and working meetings on the situation in Turkmenistan in many different countries.

Since 2005, the work of HRC Memorial in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan has concentrated on the forcible return of Uzbek refugees and false accusations of Islamic extremism. In January 2009, following the publication of a report on human rights violations: “Kyrgyzstan: human rights violations in connection with the The Nookat Events”, members of the program were deported from Kyrgyzstan.

On October 20, 2009 HRC Memorial and the Society of Political Emigrants from Central Asia held a vigil at the Kyrgyz Embassy remembering human rights violations in the country.

On December 14 and 15, 2009 HRC Memorial and local representatives of Freedom House and IWPR organised a regional conference in Almaty, Kazakhstan entitled “The Fight Against Terrorism and Human Rights”. Human rights activists, lawyers and regional representatives of international organizations participated in the conference. It provided an opportunity for the organizations to exchange information, share experiences, and identify the main problems faced by local human rights activists.

The Central Asian program of HRC Memorial began in 1999.
The program’s central activity involves monitoring cases of political and religious persecution in the region; mainly in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. The program’s monitoring work is conducted in close cooperation with local human rights activists.

Monitoring of Human Rights Violations in Central Asia

Head of the program – Vitaly Ponomarev

False Accusations of Cases on Islamic Extremism in Russia

Head of program – Vitaly Ponomarev

It was founded at the beginning of 2005 and monitors cases of criminal prosecution of “Islamic Extremism” across the regions of Central Russia, the Volga, Siberia, and the Urals.
Political Prisoners in Contemporary Russia

Head of the program – Anna Karetnikova

The work of the program started in summer of 2008. Today it is the youngest program of the Human Rights Centre Memorial.

The program concentrates on contemporary political prisoners, a situation which has arisen due to the political system in today’s Russia, which has led to serious concerns about the constitutional principle of the independence of the court system. As a result, for a considerable period of time in our country, accusations and prosecutions against political and civil activists have been fabricated.

Within so-called “demonstrated campaigns”, cases are being fabricated against scientists, doctors, vets, managers, military personnel, and religious believers.

As a result, the lack of independence of the court system is being used as a weapon against tens of thousands of people, who are “out of favour” with the authorities and have found themselves behind bars on false and arbitrary charges; an inadequately cruel punishment. Their appeals and protests are ignored by the authorities. Many political prisoners lack basic necessities such as medicines, medical care, financial means for their defence, psychological support, and public attention to their case. Their families are deprived of livelihoods and the ability to support relatives.

The basic task of the program is to ensure that the public does not forget about these people; to collate and disseminate information about them; to give political prisoners help; and consolidate society towards an independent, humane and effective judicial system.

In 2009, the program against political repression in Russia organized public outdoor and cultural activities, aiming at breaking through the wholesale information blockade on the existence of political prisoners in contemporary Russia and to involve Russian society in support of political prisoners.

Protests and vigils were held in defense of political prisoners, including those convicted in the Yukos case, those scientists convicted of being spies, and political activists prosecuted for peaceful protest against the regime.

These activities included:
- The vigil was held for National Bolshevik members awaiting trial (including Pavel Zherebin, Mikhail Pulin and Alena Goryacheva).
- The vigil in memory of civil and political activist Rim Shakayilo from Krasnoyarsk, who died in a high security prison colony.
- The program’s participation in protests organised by Trade Union, Left-wing organizations, and Anarchist organizations dedicated to defending political prisoner Valentin Urusov from Yakutia.
- On June 26, program participants organised a city walk wearing t-shirts embossed with Mikhail Khodorkovsky’s photograph.
- On July 16 a vigil was held for Lebedev, Khodorkovsky and human rights’ activists from Ekaterinburg.
- On August 18, activities were conducted in defence of political prisoners, against punitive psychiatry, and in protest against the treatment of Yulia Privedennaya, who was committed by a court hearing to an involuntary psychiatric examination.
- On October 25, a vigil for the Yukos prisoners was held.
- On November 12, a vigil for Oleg Orlov was held, protesting the criminal accusations against him by Ramzan Kadyrov.
The program “Human Rights Protection Through International Mechanisms” emerged in 2000 as a joint project of the HRC Memorial and European Human Rights Advocacy Centre, London. It is aimed at legal consulting on preparation and lodging complaints to the European Court of Human Rights, professional skills enhancement of lawyers, attorneys, NGO’s, who are sending the complaints to the European Court.

Basic activities of the program:
• rights defense of Chechen military conflicts’ victims - the victims of extrajudicial executions, massive bomb attacks, abductions, tortures;
• rights defense of persons - victims of tortures and violent treatment while being in militia or in imprisonment before trial;
• rights defense of persons who are discriminated due to ethnic or racial reasons;
• rights defense of aliens being deported or expelled from Russia;
• children rights defense;
• rights defense of persons who suffered from unjust criminal and civil court procedures.

Within the frameworks of the project in 2009 the following events were held:
• two days’ long joint strategic seminar was held in Moscow with participation of all the EHRAC and HRC Memorial lawyers (including those from regional); it was dedicated to investigation of cases in ECHR concerning appeals from the North Caucasus, cases on rapes, and the matters regarding ECHR judgments execution and payment of compensation;
• EHRAC International Steering Committee 2009;
• NGOs’ roundtable in Moscow on ECHR’s decisions execution.

During 2009 the lawyers of the HRC Memorial participated in different seminars, meetings, organized by the Moscow Helsinki Group and United Nations High Commissioner for refugees. The seminars were dedicated to the matters of extradition and deportation, jury in Kabardino-Balkaria, problems of discrimination of the ezids in Krasnodarsky Krai, methods of appeals of a decision of the Prosecutor’s General Office for extradition.

In 2009 it was decided to create a project for ECHR’s judgments execution, that’s an important continuation of program’s work. This project should contribute to investigations on domestic level of violations discovered in European Court’s judgments, prosecution of guilty, and amendments to the legislation for the sake of prevention of such violations.

Within the frameworks of the program news-bulletin which contains the information and comments on selected European Court’s judgments, discussions and analysis of relevant problems in the area of human rights violations and defense is issued twice a year.
Harmonization of Inter-ethnic Relations

Through the Creation of Small Business in the Prigorodny District of North Ossetia-Alania

The program’s work began in 2007, assisted by the organization “Russian-German exchange”. In 2000 in Ingushetia, together with the HRC Memorial, the program held courses on how to set up small businesses, aimed at Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Chechnya. The majority of these small enterprises are now doing business and making profits for the participants of the courses.

As a result of the program in 2009:
• 173 people received training,
• 20 businesses were set up; 18 of them are functioning, and new jobs are being created,
• Presentations were held in 29 schools in the district for 1101 senior pupils,
• Due to the provision of new equipment, new activities took place in schools (for example sports lessons, and photo- and video study groups),
• The quality of teaching in school increased.

Due to the joint activities, children of different nationalities had the opportunity to get to know each other. This experience of positive interaction is a key factor in creating bridges between different nationalities.

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The program was set up in the Prigorodny district of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania. The program teaches business management, while simultaneously organizes activities aimed at the local population, above all school children.

The aims of the program are:
• To reduce ethnic tensions in the region through economic stabilization,
• To reconcile the interests of different sections of the population,
• To integrate the Ingush ethnic minority into the general population through meetings and communication between local communities,
• To restore multicultural teaching and confidence through the creation of platforms encouraging interaction between the Ingush and Ossetian population, targeted mainly at children, teenagers, teachers and local authorities.

The objectives of the program:
• The empowerment of schools as the bedrock of socialization and integration for children and young adults, contributing to a reduction in ethnic segregation through teaching Ingush and Ossetian pupils in combined groups,
• Making contact with the schools of the Prigorodny district and the organization of different actions aimed at increasing inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance,
• Integration through economic empowerment and enhanced prospects for the inhabitants of the Prigorodny district of the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania and a decrease in the region’s dependence on federal subsidies,
• To change the regional authorities’ attitude towards the problem of inter-ethnic relations and integration of the Ingush ethnic minority population.

Head of the program – Julia Chardina
Natalia Estemirova was born on February 28, 1958 in a Russian-Chechen family in Kamyshlov in the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia. She graduated from the history department of Grozny University, and then worked as a teacher. In spring of 1994 Natasha gave birth to a daughter – Lana.

After the first Chechen war she dedicated herself to TV journalism and social work, including organizing aid for former prisoners of “filtration camps” across Chechnya.

In October 1999 she began to work with the Human Rights Centre Memorial becoming its leading member in the region. It was during this time that Natalia got close to Anna Politkovskaya, Stanislav Markelov, and other journalists and human rights activists. The majority of the “Chechen” articles of this period were her work. She was published in “Novaya Gazeta”, and after the assassination of Anna Politkovskaya in 2006 she actually took Anna’s place on the editorial board.

Natalia received information about abductions and disappearances, torture and assassinations. It was not a merely monitoring for Natalia; while investigating every case she tried to help people, appealed to the authorities and publicized the crimes committed.

Natalia Estemirova received many international awards, including the Swedish Parliament “Right to exist” Award (2004); the Robert Shuman Medal (European Parliament, 2005); the Anna Politkovskaya Award (2007), established by the organization “Reach all women in war”; and the “Human Rights Watch Defender Award” (2007).

Natasha lived as “a free person in an authoritarian country”. However at one point she worked alongside the authorities. She was involved in the Commission for Prison Inspections and she was also head of the Grozny Public Council for a month (she was “dismissed” from this position by the Chechen President). Natalia was aware of the threat facing her: twice after meetings with Ramzan Kadyrov she left the Russian Federation for several months, but then returned to Chechnya.

In the morning of July 15, 2009 Natalia Estemirova was abducted near her house by the unknown. Her body was found the same day around 3 p.m. in Ingushetia, next to the village of Gazi-Yurt. Natasha was killed by gunfire to the head and chest. She was buried in Chechnya in the village of Koshkeldy.

The Human Rights Centre’s Archive

The documents kept in HRC Memorial’s archive reflect 20 years of the centre’s work on local conflicts across the territory of the former Soviet Union, including:

- Nagorny-Karabakh and the events in Baku (the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict);
- South Ossetia (the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict);
- Georgia (internal conflict);
- Transdnestrria and Gagauzia (the Transnistrian conflict);
- Abkhazia (the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict);
- Tajikistan (civil war in Tajikistan);
- Chechnya (the war in Chechnya and the internal Chechen conflict);
- events in Karachayevo-Cherkessia; events in Tatarstan; and the Crimea (the problem of Crimean Tatars).

A significant quantity of documents forms archives, separated into themes:

- Political persecution [in the Russian Federation, Georgia, Belarus, and Central Asia];
- ethnic persecution;
- the rights of soldiers and conscripts; refugees and forced migrants;
- the creation and development of Memorial as an international organization and the HRC Memorial;
- NGO’s in the Russian Federation.

The archives include documents about government structures and non-governmental organizations; information from the media; reports and statements from human rights organizations; leaflets; posters; and video-, photo- and audio materials.

Over 20,000 items have been gathered in more than 30 archives, including 500 hours of video, 400 hours of audio records, and more than 8,000 photos.

We are continuing to collect and compile lists of documents we receive with the help of an electronic database, which already contains information about 5,800 documents. During 2009, 700 archival materials were entered into the database.

In memory of Natalia Estemirova

Natalia Estemirova was born on February 28, 1958 in a Russian-Chechen family in Kamyshlov in the Sverdlovsk Region of Russia. She graduated from the history department of Grozny University, and then worked as a teacher. In spring of 1994 Natasha gave birth to a daughter – Lana.

After the first Chechen war she dedicated herself to TV journalism and social work, including organizing aid for former prisoners of “filtration camps” across Chechnya.

In October 1999 she began to work with the Human Rights Centre Memorial becoming its leading member in the region. It was during this time that Natalia got close to Anna Politkovskaya, Stanislav Markelov, and other journalists and human rights activists. The majority of the “Chechen” articles of this period were her work. She was published in “Novaya Gazeta”, and after the assassination of Anna Politkovskaya in 2006 she actually took Anna’s place on the editorial board.

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Today we really need functioning organizations. In this regard, the resumption Memorial’s work in Chechnya is a big advantage. I have deep respect for my colleagues from this organization, who have been working here since the very beginning of the second military campaign, risking their lives, and continue to work despite the fact that this risk has not lessened. This is testified by the assassination of Natasha Estemirova and the forced departure of some of Memorial’s members.

Quotations on the Human Rights Centre

Bernard Kouchner,
French Minister of Foreign Affairs
(Official translation)

Dear Mr. Orlov,

As you know, during my recent visit to Moscow I visited Memorial’s office. Once again I was able to appreciate the courage of its members and also the dangerous security situation, in which activists daily defend human rights in Russia. These are difficult times; both Memorial and you personally are facing charges caused by campaigning for Russian human rights activists and slander. On behalf of the French Government and myself let me express to you our support and solidarity. Be confident, that we support your longstanding battle to defend human rights in Russia, which you have been leading for so many years.

Lord Frank Judd,
a Member of the House of Lords, Great Britain
(Extract from a speech during the awards ceremony of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation “Hurry up doing good”, December 8, 2009)

They [the representatives of the Chechen NGO] told me how important Memorial’s activities are, and how it has helped them. We are concerned about the pressure placed on Memorial due to activities in defending human rights. We think it is crucial that the authorities make it clear that these organizations must be protected by the state. Mildly speaking, the equivocation and circumlocution expressed by ministers about human rights should not come from the mouths of statesmen. The work of these organizations must be safeguarded by the state!

Vladimir Pozner,
the President of the Academy of Russian Television
(Extract from a speech during the awards ceremony of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation “Hurry up doing good”, December 8, 2009)

Human Rights Centre Memorial’s in Chechnya member Natalia Estemirova had one motivation – the right of a person to their fundamental human rights, first of all being the right to life and human dignity.

Having been a talented teacher, later in her life she was a human rights activist. At the beginning of the second Chechen war Natalia worked in Grozny, and since 2000 she worked for the Human Rights Centre Memorial in Grozny. Journalists and human rights activists arriving in Grozny on business trips often stayed at Natalia’s house. She gave them accommodation, helped them, and organized meetings for them with victims of torture, bomb attacks, and families who had suffered due to the authorities. Everyone trusted her and it was clear that she was a person to trust.

Souhayr Belhassen,
the President of the FIDH
(Extract from the interview with radio station “Svoboda” concerning her trip to Moscow for the hearing of the case “Ramzan Kadyrov against HRC Memorial” and Oleg Orlov, September 25, 2009)

As President of the International Federation of Human Rights, which joins 150 organizations throughout the world (including the Russian organization Memorial), I came to Moscow personally as I did not want to limit myself by sending a colleague. I came to show solidarity with Oleg Orlov. I think that its very important to demonstrate that human rights activists across the world support their Russian colleague, who dared to condemn the dictatorship and repression in Chechnya.

The head of the one of the Chechen NGO
(Extract from the materials of “Caucasian knot” December 17, 2009)

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Bart Staes,
a Member of the European Parliament from Belgium
(Extract from recordings of Radio France International, December 17, 2009)

The decision [to award the prize to Memorial and the Russian human rights community in general] was taken unanimously. Representatives of all political blocs in the European Parliament were convinced that the nomination of Memorial was an important sign of support for those who fight for civil liberty in Russia, for freedom of the press, for human rights, and for dissemination of the facts about events in Chechnya. The assassination of Nataliya Estemirova last summer opened many eyes, and in a certain sense influenced the decision to award the prize. We are also aware how important the work of Memorial and its members whom we often invite to the European Parliament, is.
On December 16, 2009 the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded to representatives of the International Historical-Enlightment Human Rights and Humanitarian Society Memorial, and all human rights activists in Russia. Honorary prizes were presented by the Chair of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek.

Announcing the winners on October 22, Jerzy Buzek said: “By awarding this prize... we hope to contribute to ending the cycle of fear and violence surrounding human rights activists in the Russian Federation. We also declare that civil society activists everywhere must be free to exercise their most basic right of expression. «...Freedom to follow our thoughts is the basis of attaining truth».

At the solemn ceremony on December 16 Sergey Kovalev spoke on behalf of the winners. He underlined that this is not only Memorial’s prize, but also a prize for all Russian human rights activists. He emphasized that human rights activists have been defending human values for 48 years, first in the Soviet Union, and now in Russia. This fight has always been tragic. Today it has often led to the death of the best, the most fearless. The auditorium observed a minute of silence in memory of Farid Babaev, Anastasia Baburova, Nikolay Girenko, Stanislav Markelov, Anna Politkovskaya, and Natalia Estemirova.

Oleg Orlov commented on the award: “I’m honored that Lyudmila Mikhailovna Alekseeva, Sergey Adamovich Kovalev and I received Sakharov Prize. However, this prize has been awarded to us as representatives of Memorial and other human rights groups in Russia. The prize has been awarded to the whole human rights movement in Russia. I’m grateful for that.”

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, named in honour of the Soviet physicist and political dissident Andrei Sakharov, has been awarded by the European Parliament every year since 1988 to individuals or organizations who have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy. On December 16, 2009 20 years have passed since Andrei Sakharov’s death.