

Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre presents *30 Years Later*

Russia's past, present and future: lectures, discussions, debates, art
26–28 April 2024, La Gaîté Lyrique & Mémorial-France, Paris

In September 2023, Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre launched the project [30 Years Before](#). In concert with independent media outlets, human rights activists, experts, and members of civil society, we have been trying to understand what made the current regime in Russia possible.

Six months after its launch, we will present *30 Years Before* in Paris. We will not only share the preliminary results of our project but also continue to raise important questions about post-Soviet Russia, this time in live discussions. Speakers from Russia, Ukraine, and France will discuss war, political crackdowns, minorities, human rights, and transitional justice at La Gaîté Lyrique (3bis rue Papin, Paris).

Simultaneous Russian ↔ French translation will be provided throughout the proceedings.

We will also turn to the arts in search of answers. Attendees will enjoy a stage reading of Julia Vishnevets's play *The Waiting Is Harder Than the Burying* and a screening of the documentary film *Fixers in Wartime: The Invisible Reporters*, directed by Robin Grassia and Arnaud Froger of Reporters Without Borders. Our event's second venue, Mémorial-France (23 rue Greneta, Paris), will host an anti-war exhibition by the Russian artists Andrey Kuzkin, Alisa Yoffe, and Ivan Lungin.

We will be broadcasting the entire event live on our YouTube channel.

Programme at La Gaîté Lyrique

Saturday, 27 April 2024

3:00–3:20 p.m.	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• François Croquette, former French Ambassador for Human Rights, member of Mémorial-France, and director for climate and ecology at Paris City Hall• Tatyana Kasatkina, wife of Oleg Orlov, one of the founders of Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre and a political prisoner
3:20–3:30 p.m.	Presentation of the media project <i>30 Years Before</i> Anastasia Garin, human rights activist and executive director of Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre
3:30–5:00 p.m.	Roundtable <i>War</i> With its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, Russia launched the largest war in Europe since the Second World War. The invasion was preceded by a series of armed conflicts involving Russia. War and the military were among the “linchpins” pulling Russia back into the past. In 1999, the war

	<p>in Chechnya served as Putin’s springboard to the presidency. For the last ten years, the war in Ukraine has been a primary tool for ensuring that the current Russian regime cannot be removed. Focusing on Chechnya, the Balkans, Syria, Ukraine, and Africa, our experts will discuss Moscow’s recent military interventions—both open and unofficial (“hybrid wars”)—and the criminal practices they engender, which spill over from one conflict to the next.</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alexander Cherkasov, human rights activist, Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre, “Chain of wars, chain of crimes, chain of impunity” ● Denis Volokha, Kharkiv Human Rights Group, “Mission impossible: cataloguing all of Russia’s crimes in Ukraine” ● Ousmane Ndiaye, journalist, TV5Monde, TBD ● Laurent Geslin, journalist, <i>Le Courrier des Balkans</i>, “The war in Ukraine: are the Balkans a second front?” <p>Moderator: Sasha Kulaeva, human rights activist and lecturer at Sciences Po</p>
5:00–5:15 p.m.	Break
5:15–6:45 p.m.	<p>Roundtable <i>The Special Services and the Repressive State Apparatus in Russia: Attempts at Civilian Control</i></p> <p>Post-Soviet Russia’s security services, law enforcement agencies, and penitentiary system went through a series of mostly formal and structural reorganizations. But their essence has not changed, and now the security services have once again become the regime’s instrument for controlling society and politics. The scale of the crackdown over the last two years has exceeded the magnitude of political repression during the final three Soviet decades and is confidently moving Russia “back to the future.” The panellists on this roundtable will talk about why it proved impossible to shed this Soviet-era legacy, the post-Soviet transformation of the security services and law enforcement, and attempts at civilian control over these agencies during this period.</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nikita Petrov, historian and public activist, “Vetting: the secret services through the prism of Soviet times—access to the archives” ● Anna Karetnikova, human rights activist and lawyer, “Monitoring places of detention: prisons, punitive psychiatry, and Public Monitoring Commissions” ● Sergei Babinets, human rights activist, lawyer, and head of Crew Against Torture, “The evolution of brutality: from the militia to the police” ● Gilles Favarel-Garrigues, political scientist and researcher, “Public monitoring, the ‘vigilance’ of citizens, and their interaction with law enforcement agencies” <p>Moderator: Veronika Dorman, journalist, <i>Libération</i></p>

6:45–7:00 p.m.	Break
7:30–9:00 p.m.	<p><i>The Waiting Is Harder Than the Burying</i> A stage reading of Julia Vishnevets’s play</p> <p>Since mid-2022, the Wagner Group has been recruiting inmates in Russian penal colonies and sending them en masse to fight in Ukraine in the hottest spots. In return, the men have been offered good pay, early releases, and pardons, but only a small fraction of the inmates have made it home alive. The documentary play <i>The Waiting Is Harder Than the Burying</i> consists of conversations among the Russian women waiting for these men to come home from prison and the war.</p> <p>The play is based on material from an online chat room where the wives, sisters, and mothers of the Russian mercenaries share their experiences and worries. The text is a polyphony of anonymous remarks. Amidst this chaos we observe the evolution of the collective female character from prison to war and rebellion, from hope to despair and reflection, in keeping with the laws of classical dramaturgy.</p> <p>Director: Yulia Vishnevets Production designer: Aglaya Shulzhenko Actresses: Irina Verbitskaya, Irina Zamula, Nadezhda Kutepova, Anna Lebedeva, and Maria Chuprinskaya</p> <p>Before the reading, theatre scholar Elena Gordienko will present <i>Lioubimovka 2022, l'écho de l'écho: théâtre russophone en temps de guerre</i>, an anthology of plays published by Sampizdat Éditions, and <i>Five Plays About the War</i>, published in Russian by Freedom Letters, which features Yulia Vishnevets’s play <i>The Waiting Is Harder Than the Burying</i>.</p>

Sunday, 28 April 2024

2:00–3:30 p.m.	<p>Roundtable <i>Immigrants and Other Vulnerable Groups</i></p> <p>Humaneness, non-violence, and avoidance of hatred were important messages of those who seemingly democratized Russia in 1991. In the years that followed, however, hatred, violence, and dehumanization were not countered by the society at large. Consequently, such ingredients of Russia’s “negative identity” as xenophobia and discrimination against refugees, ethnic minorities, and other minorities have become the “glue” holding Putin’s Russia together. The outcome has been sad. Russia set an anti-record in 2023: never before had it granted refugee status to such a small number of people. The situation with minority rights is no better. The panellists on this roundtable will discuss different aspects of these processes: Russia as a “country of refuge,” ethnic discrimination, and the situation faced by people in Chechnya and Ukraine.</p>
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	<p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Svetlana Gannushkina, human rights activist, Civic Assistance Foundation, “The Russian Federation as a country of refuge” ● Stefania Kulaeva, human rights activist, Memorial Anti-Discrimination Centre (ADC Memorial), “The experience of defending the rights of minorities and migrants: 30 years of fighting against racism” ● Mairbek Vatchagaev, historian, researcher, and author, “Problems and successes in integrating Chechens in Western countries” <p>Moderator: Anne Le Roux, sociologist and lecturer</p>
3:30–3:45 p.m.	Break
3:45–4:30 p.m.	<p><i>Fixers in Wartime: The Invisible Reporters</i> A screening of the documentary film by Robin Grassia and Arnaud Froger, Reporters Without Borders (RSF)</p> <p>Foreign journalists rarely work alone in Ukraine. Hundreds of Ukrainian “fixers” are involved in investigating war crimes and producing shocking photographs of the atrocities and the destruction. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) introduces you to this profession, one of the most dangerous in the world. The filmmakers observed the daily work of fixers in Ukraine. Amid the protracted conflict and ongoing fighting, these invisible assistant journalists remain on the front lines, gathering the news and thus preventing the war from being forgotten. RSF journalists followed some of them, thus facing the same risks to their life and sanity.</p> <p>The film will be introduced by Jeanne Cavalier, head of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk at Reporters Without Borders (RSF). After the screening, Ms. Cavalier will answer questions from the audience.</p>
4:30–6:00 p.m.	<p>Discussion <i>The Work of Russian and International Journalists Amidst War and Dictatorship</i></p> <p>For more than twenty years, long before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the country’s independent media outlets and journalists were accused of “activist journalism,” as opposed to “impartial” journalism. Anna Politkovskaya was accused of something of this sort. Now, with a war underway in Ukraine and a dictatorship in power in Russia, this question has become even more urgent. Is it possible to remain “above the fray” while covering the war, especially when you are from one of the warring countries? Should a journalist not take sides in what they write or broadcast? What should they do when what they publish can be used by Russian propaganda? How can journalistic standards be reconciled with the desire not to publish something that harms decent people? What does journalism have to do with human rights and humanitarian work? Journalists from independent media outlets will discuss all these questions.</p>

	<p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margarita Loginova, journalist, online news magazine <i>Vyorstka</i> • Natalia Kildiyarova, journalist • Alexei Ponomarev, journalist, <i>Holod</i> podcast • Elena Voloshin, reporter • Paul Gogo, journalist <p>Moderator: Jeanne Cavelier, head of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk at Reporters Without Borders (RSF)</p>
6:00–6:15 p.m.	Break
6:15–6:30 p.m.	<p>Presentation of the legal project <i>100 Days After Putin</i> Grigory Vaypan, lawyer and constitutional law expert</p>
6:30–8:00 p.m.	<p>Debate <i>100 Days After Putin</i></p> <p>Taking the eponymous transitional justice draft project as their starting point, the participants in this debate will discuss the “difficult past” and a future in which something would have to be done about this past. People of different outlooks and political creeds will discuss the prospects for Russia’s future democratization and the contours of a new political and legal system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ekaterina Schulmann, political scientist and university lecturer • Grigory Vaypan, lawyer and constitutional law expert • Mikhail Lobanov, 2021 State Duma candidate, trade union activist, and mathematics professor <p>- Moderator: Natalie Nougayrède, journalist</p>

You must pre-register on the La Gaîté Lyrique website (<https://www.gaite-lyrique.net/eutopia>) to be admitted to all the events.

Anti-war exhibition by Russian artists Andrey Kuzkin, Alisa Yoffe, and Ivan Lungin

Opening: 6:00 p.m., 26 April 2024. The exhibition will be on view 6:00–10:00 p.m., 26 April; 12:00–10:00 p.m., 27 April; and 12:00–8 p.m., 28 April. Admission is free.

An anti-war exhibition by Russian artists Andrey Kuzkin, Alisa Yoffe, and Ivan Lungin will take place 26–28 April 2024 at our other venue, Mémorial-France (23 rue

Greneta). All three artists have been immersed in the delirious new reality for the past two years, and their art has turned into a sublimated wish for a swift end to the war. Andrey Kuzkin writes the incantation-like mantra “I want the war to end” (part of the project *Time of War*) every day in different languages. The mantra flows from one page to the next, gradually filling reality and taking over the surrounding space. Ivan Lungin collects shards and fragments of material culture, which are transformed into a synecdoche for war under the impact of context and the peculiarities of human perception. Alisa Yoffe documents the era in digital notebooks, later reassembling these “situations” by transposing the images to large surfaces and thus reliving the recorded events over and over again.

The Venues

La Gaîté Lyrique

3bis rue Papin
75003 Paris

Mémorial-France

23 rue Greneta
75002 Paris