Pax Christi International Peace Award 2013
International Memorial Society, Russian Federation

PRESS RELEASE

The 2013 Pax Christi International Peace Award has been granted to the International Memorial Society for its outstanding work in keeping alive the memory of the victims of political repression in Russia's recent history and for its deep commitment to human rights in the country. The Award has been graciously funded by the Cardinal Bernardus Alfrink Peace Fund since 1988 and it honours contemporary individuals and organisations who make a stand for peace, justice and non-violence in different parts of the world.

Since its inception in the late 1980s the International Memorial Society has been committed to preserving the historical truth about the crimes of totalitarianism and the resistance to it, to perpetuating the memory of the victims, and to offering social support to the survivors. By doing this International Memorial helps support transitional justice efforts and reconciliation processes, as well as the construction of a re-imagined political community, paving the way for future generations and the prevention of future violence.

Pax Christi International also acknowledges Memorial's comprehensive work in the field of human rights. Through its over 60 member organisations Memorial reveals a continuous dedication to bringing Russian society closer to the ideals of democracy through the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. Its member organisations are widely engaged in research, education, and advocacy. Issues such as the opposition to discrimination against Roma people, protection for refugees and forced migrants and armed conflicts within the Russian Federation are well-known to Memorial members.

The International Memorial Society is also a vivid promoter of youth engagement in educational initiatives to increase awareness of history. Over the past 14 years, Memorial's historical research competition for senior pupils "People in history - Russia in the 20th century" has been tremendously successful, with up to 2,000 essay submissions every year. Many Memorial member organisations have successfully involved young people in their activities; those in Perm, Ryazan, St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Penza are good examples.

In light of the pressure experienced by non-governmental organisations in Russia today, the award symbolises Pax Christi International's solidarity with all defenders of human rights within the International Memorial Society, and with the Russian human rights community at large.

The Peace Award Ceremony will take place in Brussels on November 14, 2013.

Brussels, 10 July 2013