

Russia's FSB Is Interrogating Teens Over Essay Competition, NGO Warns

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Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers are intimidating high schoolers who won a history essay competition, the Memorial human rights group has said.

Memorial has [organized](#) the history essay-writing contest for high school students since 1999. The NGO was [labeled](#) a "foreign agent" in 2016 under a Russian law targeting organizations that take part in "political activity" and receive money from abroad.

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Individuals identifying themselves as local authorities and FSB agents had for the past month summoned the winners' teachers in dozens of regions, the NGO said in a statement Tuesday. The officials allegedly pressured the teachers to stop working with Memorial and summoned some of the students who participated for "preventive conversations."

The similarities between the visits as well as their timing suggest that they “are not a local initiative, but a top-down directive,” Memorial [said](#) in a statement.

“We treat all these actions not just as attempts to throw mud at the educational work that Memorial has done for many years, but as an attempt to scare students and teachers and impose censorship,” the NGO said.

Pro-Kremlin activists, shortly after state television [aired](#) a segment calling the NGO “modern-day Judases,” [attempted](#) to disrupt Memorial’s awards ceremony for the competition in Moscow this spring.

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