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Jailed Russian Gulag Historian Wins 2021 Sakharov Freedom Award

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Yury Dmitriyev. **Igor Podgorny / TASS**

Jailed Russian gulag historian Yuri Dmitriyev, who is serving 13 years in prison, has won the Sakharov Freedom Award on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nobel laureate and human rights activist Andrei Sakharov..

Dmitriyev was recognized for his work in identifying victims of Soviet repressions in Karelia by reassembling the bones from mass graves, the Norwegian Helsinki Committee human rights NGO said in a statement.

"Dmitriyev's work on so-called liquidations during the Stalin era are considered so threatening by the current Russian government that accusations of paedophilia and sexual abuse have been fabricated against him," said Secretary General of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee Geir Hønneland.

In 2016, Dmitriyev was charged with the producing pornography sexually abusing his adopted daughter. He was acquitted in the spring 2018 only to have a second criminal case opened

against him a few months later.

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Last summer, Dmitriyev was sentenced to 3.5 years in prison in the sexual violence against his adopted daughter case. In September, the term was increased to 13 years.

"You can draw a line from Andrei Sakharov's time as a political prisoner, from his struggle to ensure that Russia faces up to its past and the importance of documentation and truth to prevent new atrocities, straight up to Yury Dmitriyev's struggle in modern-day Russia," Hønneland said.

The issue of political prisoners has gained increased attention in Russia after the jailing of the Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny and the prosecutions of his supporters and opposition activists.

Sakharov's turbulent history as a political dissident in the Soviet Union has won him admiration in the West and among Russian intelligentsia. The Sakharov Prize is awarded annually by the European Parliament to people and organizations dedicated to human rights and freedoms.

Earlier this week, Moscow authorities canceled an exhibition dedicated to Sakharov's 100th anniversary.

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