

***“Memorial” Society***  
***St. Petersburg, Russian Federation***

## **The Virtual Gulag Museum. Internet-Project**

The Virtual Museum of the Gulag ([www.gulagmuseum.org](http://www.gulagmuseum.org)), created in 2004 by the Research and Information Centre “Memorial” in St Petersburg, is a virtual resource that collects and publicises material on the topic of political repression in the former Soviet Union, mainly from local Russian museums. The website consists of a searchable database in which each exhibit (items from local museums, the museums themselves, mass burial sites, memorials and non-museum objects such as landscapes) is accompanied by a detailed, museum-standard label. The Virtual Museum of the Gulag is today at a stage at which the creation of virtual exhibitions out of the existing material has replaced the accumulation of new visual material as the most important task, marking the transition from an information resource to a virtual museum.

In Russia there are no dedicated state programmes commemorating the Gulag and the topic of political repression and the labour camp system is barely touched upon in history curricula. Memory of the Gulag is relegated to the regional level where exists an abundance of remote museums and exhibitions, many of them in a precarious state. The Virtual Museum of the Gulag has set itself the task of integrating these various initiatives into a united whole, without overriding or destroying the individual character of participating institutions, thereby providing not only a fuller picture of the history of political repression, but also a reflection of the contemporary memorial landscape concerning this topic.

“Memorial” has found about 300 different museums and institutions in the collections of which the topic of the Gulag is represented, including municipal museums, privately owned museums and museums attached to enterprises or schools. The Virtual Museum of the Gulag’s virtual archive contains more than 8,000 images from about 100 museums, 500 burial sites and 400 monuments. Most of these museums are situated in Russia, however, the Virtual Gulag Museum also cooperates with institutions in Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.