

26
Sep 2018

▲ Lvl. 2

No state
reply yet

Russian Federation

Alert created on: 15 May 2018

Russia: Proposed Amendments to Criminal Code Threaten Media Freedom

SOURCE OF THREAT ▶ State

CATEGORY ⓘ ▶ Other acts having chilling effects on media freedom

NO STATE REPLY YET

PARTNER: Article 19, EFJ/IFJ, Index, PEN, RSF

On 15 May 2018, Russia's State Duma unanimously approved proposed amendments to the Criminal Code (Article 284.2), which could be used to prevent the media reporting on public interest matters.

The amendments would criminalise 'the provision of recommendations and transfer of information that has lead or might have led to the introduction' of international sanctions, providing for up to three years' imprisonment and fines of \$8,000. This vague and broadly-worded provision is open to arbitrary and abusive application against journalists.

In a 15 May statement, Harlem Désir, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, criticised the proposed legislation for its chilling impact on freedom of the expression. He argued that its ambiguous wording could result in self-censorship in the Russian media, as journalists would be criminally liable for publishing 'information that has led or might have led to the introduction' of sanctions, regardless of their actual intent.

The amendment requires two further readings in the Duma and one in the Federation Council before President Vladimir Putin can sign it into law. The second Duma vote is scheduled for 17 May.

UPDATES

27 Sep 2018: On 20 September 2018, the State Duma adopted amendments to the country's Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code in the final reading. The amendments, among other things, strengthen the penalties for the dissemination of 'false' information related to defamation and information that affects privacy protection.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

 [Report by PEN International “Russia’s Strident Stifling of Free Speech 2012-2018”](#)

FOLLOW-UPS

 **27 Sep 2018** | OSCE Representative calls on Russia to drop legislative amendments that could undermine freedom of expression and access to information.

 [Statement by Harlem Désir](#)

 **16 May 2018** | New amendment to Criminal Code poses threat to freedom of media in Russia, says OSCE Representative Désir.

 [Statement by Harlem Désir](#)