

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Russia should repeal order to protect police against defamation as it risks endangering freedom of expression**

Amnesty International is concerned that the recent order of the Russian Minister of Interior aimed at protecting police from defamation, may dissuade legitimate criticism of the law enforcement officials and have a chilling effect on the media, activists and victims of police misconduct.

On 2 October 2012, the Minister passed an order 900 "On organization of protection of honour and dignity, as well as business reputation within the Ministry of Interior system". The order instructs the respective heads of police departments to monitor media reports and internet publications concerning police and to seek legal protection against untrue information or information otherwise harming the rights of police officers. The order also affords greater protection to police than common people of the country.

Amnesty International reminded the Russian authorities of internationally legally binding obligations to respect and protect freedom of expression that is enshrined in a number of major human rights instruments, to which Russia is party to, and raised its concern with the potential implications of the order in view of the recent re-criminalisation of defamation in the Russian legislation.

Amnesty International is therefore concerned that the potential risk of indictment may thus have a chilling effect on journalists, human rights and political activists, bloggers or others who may refrain from exercising their right to freedom of expression for fear of legal sanction, undermining the right to freedom of expression.

Amnesty International is also concerned that it may deter victims of human rights violations by law enforcement officials from speaking out about or reporting such abuses for fear that a defamation case or other legal action may be brought against them as a result.

Furthermore, this order will effectively provide a higher level of legal protection of the reputations of police officers than of other people, in contravention of international human rights standards.

Amnesty International called on the Russian authorities to uphold the right to freedom of expression by immediately rescinding the order that might undermine legitimate public debate on issues of public interest, which is central to the right of freedom of expression.

At the same time, Amnesty International called on the authorities to ensure that any information of credible allegations of human rights violations by law enforcement officials should lead to a prompt, impartial and effective investigations.

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