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## **Russia: President Putin due to sign high treason bill**

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to sign into law a new bill on high treason after Russia's Parliament approved it on Wednesday 31 October.

John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia Programme Director said:

“President Putin must scrap this law, which will have a chilling effect on society and put human rights activists and others who work for non-governmental organizations at grave risk.

“The measure's definition of high treason is overly broad and we fear the law could be implemented arbitrarily, placing harsh new restrictions on a wide range of activities by international organizations and their representatives, as well as Russian human rights defenders and civil society activists cooperating with them. If passed, it will once again force Russian civil society into isolation – this time behind a legal curtain.

“What is especially troubling is that the law would be prone to extended interpretation, given that Russian law does not have a narrow definition for what constitutes ‘national security’.

“We urge President Putin to reverse the recent trend of new legislation putting human rights activism and political opposition at risk – including laws re-criminalizing defamation, obliging NGOs receiving overseas funding to register as 'foreign agents' and toughening legislation and raising fines concerning peaceful assembly and protest.”