

AI Index: PRE 01/628/2012  
20 December 2012

## **'Dima Yakovlev' Bill in no one's best interests**

Russian parliamentarians must reject a bill that will have a chilling effect on human rights defenders and civil society when it goes through its third reading in the Russian Parliament's Lower Chamber - the Duma - on 21 December 2012, Amnesty International said today.

The so-called "Dima Yakovlev" Bill introduces, among other things, further severe restrictions on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and bans the adoption of Russian children by US citizens.

The bill allows the Ministry of Justice to arbitrarily stop activities and freeze the assets of NGOs that they consider to be involved in political activities, receive funding from US citizens or organizations or conduct activities threatening the interests of the Russian Federation.

It also bans persons, who are US and Russian dual nationals from being a leader or a member of Russian, international or foreign NGO participating in 'political activities' in Russia. Organizations, or their branches which violate this rule could be closed and its property seized.

If adopted, the restrictions in this law can be extended to citizens of any country banning entry and confiscating property of Russian citizens on the grounds of their violations of human rights in Russia.

"Quite apart from its clearly discriminating of Russian citizens of dual nationality there is a huge risk that the vaguely worded provisions in this bill will be used to clamp down on government critics and exposers of abuses. Indeed this would appear to be its real purpose," said John Dalhuisen, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

The bill is named after a Russian child who died after adoption in the US and was drafted as response to the Magnitsky Act, passed in the US this month, introducing sanctions on Russian alleged human rights violators. Sergei Magnitsky was a lawyer who died in Russian custody and became symbol of Russia's violations of human rights.

"This bill is frankly a childish response to the Magnitsky Act. The Duma should be focusing its efforts on how it can strengthen Russian civil society and not weaken it," said Dalhuisen

A small number of Russian parliamentarians voted against the bill pointing out that it will violate bilateral agreements with the US on the adoption of children. Police detained about 30 demonstrators who were holding pickets outside the parliament.