The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Bill to Widen Definition of Treason

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December 15, 2008



The government has submitted legislation to the State Duma that would significantly broaden the definition of treason.

Under the current criminal code, treason is defined as an action aimed at damaging the country's "external security." The bill, submitted to the Duma on Friday, would expand that definition to include damaging the country's "constitutional order, sovereignty, territorial and state integrity," Kommersant reported.

The bill would also expand the definition of espionage, adding international nongovernmental organizations and their representatives to the list of forbidden recipients of state secrets. Currently that list only includes foreign governments and their organizations or representatives.

Human rights activist Lev Levinson said the bill could severely hamper the work of NGOs.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2008/12/15/bill-to-widen-definition-of-treason-a46032