

Duma Passes Treason Bill Affecting NGOs

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The State Duma on Tuesday tentatively expanded a legal definition of treason to enable prosecution of individuals who collaborate with "international organizations" suspected of compromising national security.

The amendment to Criminal Code Article 275 was passed by 375 of 450 deputies, with only two nays, in its second and final readings the same day, RIA-Novosti reported. The amendment still needs to be signed into law.

The expanded definition of treason includes "providing consulting or another kind of work to a foreign state, foreign or international organization" if that organization acts against Russian security interests. Traitors can be punished with up to 20 years in prison.

Andrei Soldatov, a security analyst with the Agentura.ru think tank, told The Moscow Times that while the amendment acts to strengthen the fight against espionage, it could create

potential for abuse.

"It's hard to prove an act of treason," he said. "It's easy to say a person was connected with an organization that might have been involved in spying activity."

Federal Security Service deputy head Yury Gorbunov said earlier that the measure would target international organizations used as a cover for espionage work.

Earlier this year, the Duma passed legislation requiring foreign-funded nongovernmental organizations to register as "foreign agents."

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