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Russian Law Allows FSB Agents to Open Fire on Crowds

By The Moscow Times

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Russian President Vladimir Putin on Dec. 17, 2015.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed into a law a bill allowing agents from the Federal Security Service (FSB) to open fire on crowds, possibly without warnings, according to the document published on Wednesday to the government's legal information website.

The bill sailed through both houses of Russia's parliament and then the Kremlin, despite appeals by human rights activists to stop its passage.

The new law grants FSB agents the "right to withhold any warnings of their intention to use weapons, special means or physical force," if delays to opening fire could endanger lives "or lead to other severe consequences."

FSB officers will now have the power to use firearms against crowds of people to prevent acts of terror — including taking hostages or attacking government buildings – and to shoot

at women, children and disabled people in cases of an act of terror or armed attack on civilians and law enforcers.

After the bill secured a "rapid-fire" approval at the Duma and was headed to the Federation Council last week, a group of Russia's best-known human rights advocates published an open letter to the president and to the spokeswoman of the upper legislative chamber, asking them to oppose the bill.

"Adopting this bill in its current form is absolutely unacceptable, because it violates the fundamental human rights to life and health," said the letter, adding the document should at least be reviewed by legal experts and submitted for public discussion.

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