



**2018 OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING, WARSAW  
WRITTEN STATEMENT IN WORKING SESSION 10 and 11:  
Fundamental freedoms I, including: Freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly  
and freedom of association  
17 September 2018**

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the operational environment for human rights work in Russia. **NGOs and human rights defenders are facing increasing levels of harassment, smears, intimidation, physical attacks and arbitrary detention and prosecution.**

Since 2012, the Russian authorities have severely limited the rights to freedom of association and expression, in law and in practice. They have used new laws to discredit human rights work by branding independent non-governmental organizations “foreign agents”. Government-controlled media, including prime-time national television, have been deployed to paint human rights work as directed against the country’s security and its “traditional values”.

Criminal proceedings have been launched against several prominent human rights defenders, while physical attacks and threats to these defenders including from senior officials, are common, particularly in the North Caucasus.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned about **the detention and criminal prosecution of Oyub Titiev**, under false drug charges, launched in retaliation for his frontline work and intended as a **warning to other human rights defenders in Chechnya.**

Physical attacks against human rights defenders are not effectively investigated. Those who brutally attacked **Andrey Rudomakha** in December 2017 in Krasnodar or **Dinar Idrisov** in January 2018 in St Petersburg have never been identified, nor have the killers of Natalia Estemirova, to name just a few landmark cases; **the perpetrators of these crimes continue to enjoy impunity.**

**The persecution of human right defenders in Russia must end immediately. The Russian authorities should publicly acknowledge the importance of human rights work and ensure that human rights defenders are able to undertake it without harassment, smear, intimidation, physical attacks and arbitrary prosecution. Russia is required under international legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and we expect no less.**