



## Centre de la protection internationale

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### *2018 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting*

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Centre de la protection internationale raises its concern regarding the shrinking of the space for disseminating and receiving information in Russia. The authorities create obstacles for the work of independent journalists by labeling their work as "terrorism", "extremism", "propaganda" or "defamation".

A few examples to illustrate the aforementioned statement:

- In August 2018 the Minister of National Politics, Media and Information of the Republic of Chechnya requested the RF Prosecutor General, the Federal Security Service and the Investigation Committee to check the activities of "Novaya gazeta", one of the major independent media in Russia, as they, according to the Minister, deliberately incite terrorism and, as a result, threaten the constitutional order and public security in Chechnya and in Russia. Furthermore, the head of Chechnya suggested that the entry of "Novaya Gazeta" journalists into Chechnya should be banned.
- In June 2018, Internet magazine "7x7" and its editor-in-chief were sentenced to fines in the amount of 800 000 rubles and 40 000 rubles respectively. The reason of this punishment was the publication of an interview with a Russian politician, where among many other topics of public interests, the politician expressed his views on the possible legalization of some kinds of drugs.

Another important issue is the blocking of websites in Russia. Currently, any site could be blocked without a judicial order, if the prosecutor's office consider that, for example, the website contains calls for participation in mass events, including demonstrations, conducted in violation with the established procedure; or disseminates information materials of organizations that are declared to be "undesirable" in the territory of the Russian Federation, etc.

Within 2017 the prosecutor's office requested to block 192 websites. At present, amendments are proposed that will give even more power to the prosecutor's office regarding the aforementioned issue. It is also noteworthy that there are no effective remedies that could be used in respect of blockage of websites by authorities.

To conclude, we urge the Russian authorities to fully respect the right to disseminate and receive information in Russia. We also call upon the Russian authorities to follow the recommendations on the role and responsibilities of internet intermediaries made following the second joint OSCE Conference on Internet Freedom on 13 October 2017 and the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership.