

Rights endangered ahead of Russia election

by UPI

MOSCOW -- Amnesty International expressed grave concern Thursday over violations of basic human rights in Russia ahead of the Dec. 2 state Duma elections. Nicola Duckworth, the Europe and Central Asia program director at Amnesty International said in a release Thursday the imprisonment of opposition leader Garry Kasparov, the arrests of demonstrators and "the excessive use of force" have "created a climate in which it is difficult, if not outright impossible, to express dissenting views and to report these." Russian officials arrested Kasparov Nov. 24 allegedly for resisting arrest and conducting unauthorized public demonstrations. Amnesty International officials say Kasparov's arrest was planned ahead of the demonstrations. The statement by Amnesty International also criticized excessive force used by Russian police to quell "marches of dissent" in scores of Russia cities on Nov. 24 and 25. "The duty of the state to safeguard public order and to protect the rights and freedoms of those possibly affected by public events is no justification for excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators and cannot be used as an excuse when clamping down on dissent," Duckworth said.

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