

A violent protest scene

# NATALIA PROJECT

2014 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2014

## PROTECTING CIVIL RIGHTS DEFENDERS

*By Civil Rights Defenders*

Project URL: [natalia.civilrightsdefenders.org](http://natalia.civilrightsdefenders.org)

Project Twitter: [@nataliaproject](https://twitter.com/nataliaproject)

Organisation URL: [civilrightsdefenders.org](http://civilrightsdefenders.org)

- Social Exclusion
- Audiovisual
- Data
- Mobile
- Physical Computing
- Social Software

Chechen human rights defender Natalia Estemirova was abducted on the morning of July 15, 2009. She was found dead in the woods that evening, her body riddled with bullets. The Natalia Project's wrist-mounted alarm system was created as the first personal assault device designed to stop any more humanitarians suffering the same fate.

The technology was developed by Civil Rights Defenders (formerly the Swedish Helsinki Committee). They are a non-profit group working to advance human rights in Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, and to expose and prosecute those responsible for violations.

The group supports front line human rights defenders with training and resources, 'to protect the space in which they act and to strengthen their performance', often in war and conflict zones. The Natalia bracelet is now an important tool to deter the very worst reprisals and threats to this vital work, and the human rights defenders' lives.

The chunky plastic wristband is quite a straightforward piece of kit. It uses phone and satellite navigation tech to send a signal when its wearer is in

danger. This can be triggered either by the individual, if the device is forcefully removed, or if its lock is tampered with. Messages, with the exact time and coordinates of any abduction, go to anyone nearby who has subscribed to the app, who might be able to help. The alert also goes to Civil Rights Defenders' HQ to coordinate a response, and via social media, to Facebook and Twitter, to quickly mobilise global public opinion against this sort of action.

The wristband was launched in April 2013 and is already in use in the North Caucasus. The Natalia Project wants to equip 55 more humanitarians with this potentially life-saving gizmo by the end of 2014.

*Image 'Exploding Bomb Haymarket Riot 125' courtesy of Seth Anderson*

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