

Orthodox Church Sidesteps Mosque Ban

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Moscow Patriarchate on Monday stopped short of supporting an appeal by Muscovites seeking to stop construction of a mosque in their district, but the church criticized local authorities for not allowing an Orthodox Christian church on the same site.

Residents of the Tekstilshchiki district in southeastern Moscow staged a protest Sept. 11 against a mosque that could be built on Volzhsky Bulvar and collected more than 1,000 signatures for their petition protesting the construction.

The protesters, who say the mosque would take up the district's sole park and hinder parking, have asked the Russian Orthodox Church to support their campaign.

The church does not protest the construction of an Islamic temple, despite the fact that Moscow has fewer Orthodox Christian churches per capita than any other Russian region, priest Vsevolod Chaplin said Monday, Interfax reported.

Chaplin, who heads the Moscow Patriarchate's department for church and social affairs, said

district authorities should coordinate construction plans with local residents.

"Conflicts can easily be avoided if the construction site, the size of the temple and its architectural details are agreed with all interested parties, including local residents," Chaplin was quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, the city's Muslim leaders say there are far too few places of worship in the capital.

"There are very many churches in Moscow, at every step, and they're empty. There aren't traffic jams forming around them. Masses of people are only there on the biggest holidays, and even then it's not that noticeable," Shamil Alyautdinov, imam of the Memorial Mosque on Poklonnaya Gora, said in comments on Vesti FM radio, Interfax reported.

But Moscow's "four small mosques" are surrounded by weekly traffic jams as worshippers come to pray, he said, adding that Moscow had about a million native Muslims.

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