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People's Front Demands an Overhaul of Criminal Code

By Lukas I. Alpert

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A senior official with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's All-Russia People's Front said Thursday that the country's Criminal Code should be rewritten from top to bottom just two years after President Dmitry Medvedev began a series of reforms.

"We propose to develop and adopt an entirely new Criminal Code that should be the fundamental ideological and legal basis for forming a modern penal policy," said Nikolai Fyodorov, director of the Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, who is coordinating the group's national platform.

In a statement on the front's web site, Fyodorov said numerous rounds of amendments had left the Criminal Code an unworkable "patchwork" in dire need of reform.

In its current form, the system is plagued with "a repressive bias" that leads to the imprisonment of far too many people.

"Only this approach will significantly change law enforcement practices and make justice more efficient and humane," he said.

Fyodorov specifically cited the cozy relationship between judges and law enforcement as something that needed to be addressed.

It was unclear whether Fyodorov was suggesting tearing up the reforms made by Medvedev, which focused primarily on the penal system and white-collar crime, or building upon them.

Either way, the promise of reform was greeted as good news by observers.

"There are a lot of problems in the system as it stands. It is in the best interest of the public to make changes," said lawyer Yelena Lukyanova, who serves as a member of the Public Chamber.

She said she did not see talk of further reforms as a rebuke of Medvedev.

"The system has big problems from the start that have not yet been dealt with, so this process needs to continue," she said by telephone.

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