

Mother Claims Aquarium Rejected Tour Group of Autistic Children

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The photo accompanying the Facebook message posted by Yana Waldberg.

The mother of an autistic child claimed Friday that a Moscow aquarium refused to allow a tour group of autistic children on the grounds that "visitors do not like to see disabled people."

Yana Waldberg [wrote](#) about the incident on her Facebook page Friday, and the news spread through social networks Saturday. News site newsru.com reported Saturday that it had confirmed the information with Waldberg in an interview.

Earlier this year, a school for autistic children sought to organize a tour for students of an aquarium in the RIO shopping mall in Moscow, Waldberg wrote. When a teacher called the aquarium to confirm the details of the excursion, she mentioned that the students were autistic, after which an aquarium employee asked to consult with the director.

The director said the groups could not come, since, Waldberg quoted him as saying, "visitors do not like to see disabled people — it makes them feel pity. That's not acceptable." He offered to let the groups come on a day when the aquarium would be closed to normal visitors

for cleaning.

Facebook users reposting the message expressed outrage over the story, and some suggested boycotting the aquarium.

"SHAME!!! Children should be loved!" wrote user Natalia Piluy.

In a separate incident earlier this week, a media firestorm erupted over a case in which airline Vladivostok Air refused to allow a disabled teen to board a plane due to confusion over whether her condition permitted her to fly. The Maritime Transportation Prosecutor's office said it was investigating the incident.

A 2011 Prosecutor General's Office report submitted to the Federation Council said buildings and transportation facilities in Russia are poorly equipped for the disabled, Interfax reported Saturday. The report also said medications critical to disabled people's health are not made available to them quickly enough and said there are not enough such medications.

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