

United Russia Plans Tougher Penalties for Insulting Church

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Silver Shoe award being awarded to Patriarch Kirill in absentia for "miracles up to the elbows"

United Russia deputies are planning to toughen the Criminal Code to defend the Orthodox church against public criticism a few days after Patriarch Kirill was awarded a mock award for a scandal involving an expensive watch.

The planned amendments would raise penalties for inciting religious hatred and pave the way for prison terms for offenders, Izvestia reported.

For Silver Shoe organizers, for instance, the punishment could stretch to either 300,000

rubles (\$9,000) or two years in jail, the daily wrote.

Alexei Zhuravlev, a United Russia deputy, cited both the Silver Shoe award and Pussy Riot's performance in Christ the Savior Cathedral as examples that the law should be toughened.

"The Silver Shoe given to the patriarch was Article 282 [which regulates inciting religious hatred] pure and simple. Here we must increase punishment," Zhuravlev told Izvestia.

"Once again the patriarch has been attacked for his patriotic position. For many Orthodox believers this insults their feelings," he said.

Zhuravlev's comments come after the Orthodox church, which has been embroiled in several scandals lately, has claimed that anti-church forces are waging a war on the patriarch and his congregation.

The Silver Shoe awards ceremony on June 19 was the latest incident to spark outrage in church circles.

The show had the aim of degrading Orthodox believers, church spokesman Vsevolod Chaplin told Izvestia. "This could lead to a confrontation in society and push society to the brink of total civil war," he said.

Silver Shoe organizers chose Patriarch Kirill in the category of "miracles up to the elbows," a reference to a Photoshop blunder in which an expensive Breguet wristwatch was digitally removed from a photo of the patriarch while its reflection remained visible.

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