

Deputies Move to Criminalize Blasphemy

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A group of State Duma deputies is developing a bill that would criminalize blasphemy, sacrilege and anything else that offends religious believers.

Under the proposal, currently being drafted by members of the Social and Religious Organizations Committee, people convicted of insulting the faithful would face a steep fine, forced labor and even prison, Deputy Yaroslav Nilov [told](#) RIA-Novosti on Thursday.

The current 1,000 ruble (\$30) fine is "laughable," the Liberal Democratic Party deputy said. "If someone runs a red light, that's 1,000 rubles. If someone offends a million believers, that's also 1,000 rubles."

Last month, three members of the Pussy Riot punk band were sentenced to two years in prison for hooliganism motivated by religious hatred as a consequence of a brief performance in a Moscow cathedral that outraged Orthodox Church officials.

Critics accused the court of doing the bidding of the church and the Kremlin. Russia is

a secular state under its Constitution, which bars the government from establishing an official or obligatory religion.

Defamation was criminalized earlier this summer in a move seen as targeting Kremlin opponents.

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