

Provocative Anti-Muslim Movie Should Be Banned, Russian Senators Say

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Egyptian youths gathering around a burning car Saturday in Cairo during protests of "Innocence of Muslims."

Two Federation Council senators said Sunday that Internet providers should restrict access to websites hosting a trailer for the "Innocence of Muslims" movie, whose release has provoked violent anti-U.S. demonstrations across the Muslim world.

The senators' statements come a day after Google, the Internet search giant that controls popular video-hosting site YouTube, refused to delete the low-budget, 14-minute trailer from its servers after requests from the U.S. White House.

"The screening of this film has already led to the deaths of tens of completely innocent people," Ilyas Umakhanov, deputy speaker of the Federation Council, told Interfax, apparently referring to a spate of attacks on U.S. embassies and consulates in the Middle East and North Africa.

On Tuesday, U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens died after armed protesters stormed the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi in protest at the film, which mocks Islam and depicts the Prophet Muhammad as a womanizer overseeing an aggressive band of men.

President Vladimir Putin condemned the attacks at the time but said that "religious feelings of people of all beliefs must be handled very carefully," RIA-Novosti reported.

Similar attacks on U.S. diplomatic buildings have followed in Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, among other countries, and the U.S. State Department has since ordered diplomatic staff and their families to leave Sudan and Tunisia.

On Sunday, Umakhanov described "Innocence of Muslims" as "nothing more than a pornographic satire ... aimed at inflaming the situation in the Muslim world."

"It is therefore necessary to introduce restrictions, even if this causes consternation at first," he said, adding that he feared the movie could split society and lead to drawn-out conflict.

Ruslan Gattarov, another Federation Council senator, told Interfax that the Federal Mass Media Inspection Service should step in to stop the movie circulating in the Russian-speaking world.

The mass media inspection service was not immediately available for comment Sunday.

Gattarov also advised offended citizens to sue sites providing links to the scandalous clip, predicting that discontent over its content could spread beyond the Middle East and North Africa.

"I think that in the near future we should expect these protests and this wave of discontent to spread to the territory of peaceful Europe," he said.

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