

Putin Aide Calls Orthodox Protest 'Just Plain Stupid'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A close ally of President Vladimir Putin lashed out Monday at a Russian Orthodox protest that closed a performance of the rock opera "Jesus Christ Superstar" as "just plain stupid."

Sergei Ivanov, the Kremlin's chief of staff, said he saw nothing blasphemous or sacrilegious in the spectacle, which he said he watched for the first time in a London theater as an exchange student in 1974.

"In the old days, we called it going too far, but in my opinion, this is just plain stupid," Ivanov told reporters.

A Rostov-on-Don theater canceled the performance over the weekend after Orthodox activists complained to prosecutors that the show is blasphemous and mentioned a contentious bill being considered by the State Duma that would criminalize blasphemy.

Putin has not weighed in on the blasphemy debate, but Ivanov said Monday that "Jesus Christ Superstar," if anything, was educational and that the London performance had left "a great impression."

"I, of course, grew up in an atheistic state and knew nothing about elementary topics in the Bible," he said, Interfax reported. "Thanks to this opera, I got to know them. So I think that this Rostov blockheadedness, I repeat, is just plain stupid and going too far."

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