

Education Minister Defends Headscarf-Wearing Schoolgirls

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Education Minister Dmitry Livanov defended schoolgirls wearing a traditional Muslim headscarf, the hijab, in the Stavropol region by saying Wednesday that they hadn't violated any school regulations, Interfax reported.

"To my knowledge, girls at that specific school in the Stavropol region ... have been wearing headscarfs since Sep. 1. In no way did it violate either school regulations or common practice," Livanov said at a State Duma meeting during discussions on the first reading of a bill on education, according to Interfax.

A dispute over whether children could wear hijabs to public schools sparked controversy in the Stavropol region earlier this month after some schoolgirls were prevented from attending classes, drawing criticism from local Muslim clerics.

The decision resulted in a stalemate in the subsequent conflict between school officials

and the girls' parents. The Stavropol region, which is part of the North Caucasus Federal District, is densely populated by Muslims.

Livanov also said that the position of the Education and Science Ministry is that private religious practices should not come into conflict with secular school education.

"I am fully convinced that there is space for compromise in each school, which would allow for accommodating both secular education and observing cultural traditions existing in some regions and some families," Livanov was quoted as saying by Interfax.

The minister added that legal conditions for preventing similar conflicts should be worked out in the future.

His statement came in response to an inquiry about the incident in the Stavropol region school raised by Yaroslav Nilov, head of the State Duma's Social and Religious Organizations Committee, who proposed reinstituting standard school uniforms for children in line with Soviet practice.

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