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NGOs Preparing Bills to Address Domestic Violence

By Natalya Krainova

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A package of bills that would protect women, children and the elderly from domestic violence is being drafted, activists said at a news conference Wednesday.

The proposals could be submitted to the State Duma in January, Alexei Parshin, a lawyer who defends female victims of domestic violence, said on the sidelines of the event.

About 14,000 women are killed every year by their husbands or other relatives, according to the Interior Ministry.

In 2010, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women criticized Russia's measures to prevent and eliminate family violence between 1991 and 2007, according to a plan for the package of bills obtained by The Moscow Times.

The package of bills is based on a 1996 UN document called "A Framework for Model

Legislation on Domestic Violence," often referred to as the Model Code.

The bills would introduce legal definitions of five types of violence: family and domestic, sexual, physical, psychological and economic. These acts of violence can be inflicted by any family member on another but are mostly by husbands on their wives, Parshin said at the news conference.

Under the legislation, authorities would be allowed to impose pretrial and judicial protective restrictions on aggressors, such as a restraining order.

It would also oblige aggressors to pay the rent of their victims and their medical expenses if a victim is forced to rent lodging to live apart from an assailant or if the victim requires medical care as a result of the violence.

The package includes an amendment that would introduce punishment of up to 15 days in jail for an aggressor who "demonstrates disrespect" to family members, by using swear words or damaging their belongings, the plan for the bills said. A similar legal norm has worked in the Kaluga region, it said.

Another amendment would stipulate administrative arrest for an aggressor who violates a pretrial restriction.

The amendments would also empower educators to complain to law enforcement agencies if their interactions with children lead them to suspect family violence.

Parshin told The Moscow Times that the need for the victim's consent to prosecution of the aggressor could be annulled. Current amendments cancel that requirement only in cases of physical violence.

Enforcement of the bills will allow authorities to react effectively to domestic violence and make it possible to prevent domestic violence, Marina Pisklakova-Parker, director of the Anna Center, which works to prevent violence against women, said at the news conference.

Olga Kostina, a Public Chamber member and leader of Resistance, which supports victims and witnesses of crimes, spoke at the news conference and said authorities should monitor the enforcement of the planned law every year so that it can be corrected if it doesn't work properly.

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