

Top Prisons Official Criticizes Penal Reform

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The deputy head of the Federal Prison Service said Tuesday that a large-scale prison reform carried out by his body was a failure and called for a new task force to be created to study problems in Russian penitentiaries.

Eduard Petrukhin is the first Federal Prison Service official to speak publicly about prison reform since an incident in a Chelyabinsk region prison colony, where prisoners protested after complaining that they were mistreated by administration officials.

"I feel ashamed to hear the system's problems, the prison reform turned out to be a failure. It was written without asking the opinion of the public, investigators and prosecutors," Petrukhin said during a meeting of the presidential human rights council Tuesday.

Petrukhin called for the creation of task force to study the system's problems.

The large-scale reform, started in 2009 during Dmitry Medvedev's presidency, was aimed at improving the conditions in prisons and pretrial detention centers.

Justice Minister Alexander Konovalov said earlier that one of the tasks achieved by the reforms was the separation of first-time prisoners from repeat offenders.

Konovalov has also said that the country's prison colonies "preserve remnants of the Gulag," referring to the Stalin-era network of prisons.

According to the Federal Prison Service, the country's prison system contains 639,600 prisoners, down 7.6 percent from 2011.

Correction: An earlier version of this article misstated the decrease in the number of prisoners since 2011 as 7,600 inmates, instead of a 7.6 drop in the total.

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