The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Intends to Sign Adoptions Ban

By Natalya Krainova

December 27, 2012



President Vladimir Putin on Thursday said he intends to sign a controversial bill that would ban U.S. adoptions of Russian children for the indefinite future.

The announcement came a day after employees of the Russian Embassy in Washington and police there shooed away two disabled former Russian orphans who were trying to hand over a petition to Putin, which spoke against the bill and was signed by 7,000 U.S. citizens.

Putin said he sees no reason not to sign the so-called Dima Yakovlev bill banning U.S. adoptions.

The adoptions bill was a response to the so-called Magnitsky Act imposing similar sanctions on Russian officials implicated in the 2009 death of Hermitage Capital lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in pretrial detention in Moscow.

At a government meeting, the president also said he would sign a decree to improve state support of orphans, in particular those who are disabled, the Kremlin website reported.

"Much needs to be resolved" by the government to support Russian adoptive parents, he said.

The bill would cancel the bilateral adoption agreement that was signed in July 2011, according to the text of the draft legislation posted on the Duma's website.

The bilateral agreement took effect in November 2012.

Children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said Wednesday that adoptions of Russian children by U.S. citizens would stop from Jan. 1, Interfax reported.

Astakhov sent Putin a report on Thursday "explaining the legality given all international legal obligations of Russia of the ban to adopt our children," Astakhov tweeted.

The ombudsman also asked the Investigative Committee to "examine the circumstances of adoptions of all Russian children who died or suffered in the U.S.," he tweeted.

He said 46 children waiting to be adopted by Americans would remain at home. But USA Today reported Wednesday that about 1,500 U.S. families were in limbo ahead of the bill's signature or rejection by Putin, as they are waiting to adopt Russian children. The two statements could not be immediately reconciled.

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul tweeted Wednesday that he "agreed with hundreds of thousands of Russians who want children removed from political debate" and he was "saddened" by the bill.

Astakhov told Interfax on Wednesday that "any foreign adoption," not only by U.S. citizens, was harmful for Russia, because it diminished the number of domestic adoptions, in particular by creating opportunities for corruption.

Two adult Russian former orphans adopted by American parents on Wednesday tried to hand over to the embassy workers a petition for Putin, asking him not to sign the adoptions bill, PublicPost reported Thursday.

Paralympics champion Tatyana McFadden, 24, and Alexander D'Jamoos, 21, a university student and an invalid arrived at the embassy around 3 p.m. Wednesday, along with several other people.

The embassy workers asked them to wait outside the building. They waited for half an hour in the rain, wind and cold — then police arrived.

"We were told that we were staging a massive unsanctioned protest, although there were only three Russian children with Russian passports," Deborah McFadden, Tatyana's adoptive mother, told PublicPost.

The activists said they wanted to hand over a petition and a police officer inquired whether they were going to use violence if embassy staff refused to take the document.

"I look at Tatyana in a wheel chair and feel like laughing, so absurd it is," McFadden said.

In another 10 minutes an embassy worker came out, took the petition and told them to leave.

In a preamble to the petition, D'Jamoos said that if he had stayed in Russia, he would have been doomed to spend his life in a wheelchair in a state facility for the disabled, while in the U.S. he received artificial legs and was able to walk, ski, climb mountains and study at a university.

Deborah McFadden said Tatyana could have died in Russia, while now she was a gold medal-winning athlete, a brilliant student, who drives a car and has traveled around the world.

The Foreign Ministry will look into the incident outside its Washington embassy, ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich told a briefing in Moscow on Thursday, Interfax reported.

But Lukashevich seemingly defended police, saying that if "the picket" wasn't authorized by local authorities, then "police interference is absolutely normal," he said.

Meanwhile, the White House gave a vague diplomatic reply to a petition signed by almost 55,000 Russian citizens proposing to impose travel and economic sanctions on the State Duma deputies who passed the bill to ban U.S. adoptions of Russian children.

In its response, the White House slammed the adoptions bill and promised to "continue to call for full accountability for those responsible for Magnitsky's unjust imprisonment and wrongful death" but didn't say whether it would impose any additional sanctions on other people.

On Sunday, a senior State Duma deputy with the pro-Kremlin United Russia party accused reporters of misrepresenting the bill, saying it is not a ban "but abolishes a simplified [adoption] procedure for Americans" versus other foreigners, Mikhail Slipenchuk, founder of Metropol investment company, wrote on Facebook, Vedomosti reported Thursday.

The text of the bill posted in the Duma's database, however, contradicted Slipenchuk, because it said that adoptions of Russian children by Americans is "banned."

Related articles:

- Adoption Ban Passes Unanimously
- 7 Protesters of 'Dima Yakovlev' Bill Detained Near Federation Council
- Child Abuse in Russia Is Routine

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/12/27/putin-intends-to-sign-adoptions-ban-a20505