Patriarch Kirill Calls for More Adoptions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The head of the country's Orthodox Church in a Christmas speech Monday called for more local adoptions, days after a law banned Americans from becoming parents for Russian orphans.

The law took effect Jan. 1 and is in response to the Magnitsky Act, which the U.S. enacted to punish Russian officials suspected of violating human rights.

"In connection with Christmas, I would like to appeal to everybody who can take the important step of adopting children and supporting orphans -- take this step," Patriarch Kirill said in a televised address.

"There shouldn't be any orphans in our country."

Kirill made the issue the highlight of his speech. "It is very important for our people to adopt orphans into their families, with joy and a special feeling of gratitude to God, giving them not only shelter and an upbringing but also giving them their love," he said.

Opponents of the law are planning a protest on Jan. 13 and have drawn backing from some artists and the liberal party Yabloko.

The number of adoptions by Russian families is modest, with some 7,400 in 2011 compared with 3,400 of Russian children by families abroad, nearly 1,000 of those by Americans, Reuters reported.

More than 650,000 children are considered orphans in Russia, including those rejected by their living parents or taken from dysfunctional homes. Of that total, 110,000 lived in state institutions in 2011, according to government figures.

In signing the legislation at the end of last month, President Vladimir Putin echoed statements by some legislators that American parents who have been accused of abusing their adopted Russian-born children have been treated too leniently by U.S. courts and law enforcement.

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