

Bastrykin Calls on U.S. to Check Claims of Adoption Violations

By [Anna Dolgov](#)

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A man pushing a stroller with two babies inside at Patriarch's Ponds. **Vladimir Filonov / MT**

The head of Russia's Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, has asked the U.S. Attorney General to investigate media reports about 26 children who were adopted from Russia and then allegedly abused.

The letter asks U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to investigate “the facts of crude violations of the rights of 26 adopted children from Russia,” committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said, RIA Novosti reported.

The alleged violations were uncovered by a joint report by Reuters and NBC television in September that described a practice called “re-homing.”

The term — often used by owners seeking new homes for their pets — describes a practice in which parents whose adoptions are not working out give away the children to any willing

takers by posting ads on Internet bulletin boards, such as Yahoo and Facebook pages.

Bastrykin's letter comes as the European Court of Human Rights requests information from Russia on several children who were supposed to be adopted by U.S. families. The court received 23 complaints from U.S. families who were denied adoption after Russia passed the law banning U.S. adoptions in January.

Now, the court is requesting information on the fate of those children, as well as a clarification of how the adoption ban correlates with the bilateral agreement on adoptions between the two countries, which is still in effect for a year after Russia pulled out of it.

After Russia enacted its ban on U.S. adoptions, social services officials said that many of the children who had been slated to receive new homes in the U.S. had remained in orphanages.

In an interview published Tuesday, Konstantin Dolgov, the Foreign Ministry's human rights chief, said that "several" of those children had since been returned to their biological mothers, while others had been adopted by Russian families, Interfax reported. He did not provide numbers.

Many of the children mentioned in the Reuters report, including 26 from Russia, said they had endured severe physical and sexual abuse during their years of repeated "re-homing" from one household to another.

The report, which analyzed thousands of online ads posted from 2007 to 2012, identified 261 children who were advertised for "re-homing" on a Yahoo group called Adopting-from-Disruption. Yahoo has shut down the group and five others after learning of these activities, but a new "re-homing" group appeared last year on Facebook.

The issue of adoptions has become increasingly sensitive in U.S.-Russia relations, with accusations of abuse made by both sides. Russia's children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov has criticized U.S. authorities for what he sees as their failure to protect adopted children.

At the Russian-American Child Welfare Forum held in Khanty Mansiysk in September, Dolgov warned about Internet forums similar to those covered in the Reuters and NBC report, though it is not clear if his claims were based on that report. He accused U.S. authorities of failing to act to "avoid social and financial obligations before the adoptees."

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