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Constitutional Amendments Sought to Remove Ban on Official State Ideology

By Oleg Sukhov

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A protester holding a copy of the constitution at a rally in central Moscow in December, 2012. **D. Abramov / Vedomosti**

A United Russia party lawmaker has drafted amendments seeking to remove the ban on state ideology and international guarantees of human rights and liberties from the Constitution, a news report said Friday.

The final draft of the amendments, which would remove the provision that international law is an integral part of Russian law, will be ready by mid-December, Izvestia reported, citing State Duma deputy Yevgeny Fyodorov, who is the legislation's author.

Since the amendments seek to change the first chapter of the Constitution, they must be approved first at a special constitutional convention and at a referendum in which more than half of voters must participate. As of now, not a single federal referendum has been held in Russia since the Constitution was adopted in 1993 due to cumbersome procedural

requirements.

Konstantin Dobrynin, a member of the Federation Council, said that the constitutional changes required would be so fundamental and complex that it would effectively be the same as adopting a new constitution. He added that he doubted the necessity of such a move.

Mara Polyakova, a member of the presidential Human Rights Council, said that Fyodorov's amendments would be a throwback to the Soviet Union with communism entrenched as the official ideology.

Fyodorov has attracted public attention by regularly saying that Russia is effectively occupied by the U.S. and that most of Russia's elite, except for President Vladimir Putin and some of his allies, is controlled by the West.

The lawmaker's move comes after State Duma Deputy Yelena Mizulina last week proposed passing a constitutional amendment stating that Russia's national identity is based on Orthodox Christianity.

Critics have accused the Kremlin of trying to introduce a mandatory state ideology by promoting social conservatism and the Russian Orthodox Church, and cracking down on liberal views in recent years. The authorities have also been criticized for allegedly violating international laws on human rights.

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