

Public Chamber Member Says Conservative Deputy's Statements May Have Been Extremism

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A member of the Public Chamber has asked the Prosecutor General to look into statements made by conservative State Duma Deputy Yelena Mizulina to determine whether they violate laws against extremism.

At a Nov. 21 meeting of the State Duma group on the protection of Christian values, Mizulina proposed stating in the preamble to the Constitution that "Orthodoxy is the basis of Russia's national and cultural uniqueness," a statement on the Duma website said.

The proposal was soon censured by the government of the Chechen republic. "Only a madman can deny the great influence of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia. However, that is still not a reason to silently pass over the role and significance of Islam in the country's governing law," the region's government said in a statement.

Law professor and Public Chamber member Yelena Lukyanova said in a statement posted Thursday on the chamber's website that the proposal would in fact alter the basis of Russia's constitutional order.

Mizulina's spokesman later said that she had proposed mentioning "the significance of Orthodoxy in the development of Russian history," but had not suggested attributing a "defining role" to Orthodoxy or establishing it as a state religion, Itar-Tass reported.

According to Article 14 of the Constitution, "Religious associations are separate from the government and equal before the law," which precludes adding such a point to the preamble, Lukyanova said.

Furthermore, actions aimed at "forcefully changing the principles of the constitutional order" are classified as "extremist activities" under Russia's Criminal Code.

Mizulina may have broken two laws, the first against "public appeals to perform extremist activity with the use of mass media" and the second against inciting enmity towards a religion with the use of one's official rank, Lukyanova said.

Both offenses are punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

While other state deputies might have been able to plead ignorance of the law, Mizulina has a PhD in the field and represented the State Duma in Russia's Constitutional Court for several years, Lukyanova added.

From her position as head of the Committee on Family, Women and Children, Mizulina has co-authored a series of conservative bills, including the anti-gay propaganda law that went into force earlier this year.

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