

Russia to Establish Courts for International Child Custody Cases

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will establish eight special courts to adjudicate international child custody battles in which one parent takes the child abroad without the permission of the other parent, a government official said Monday.

In February, the lower house of the Russian parliament passed in its first reading a bill to regulate the application of the International Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which aims to facilitate the immediate retrieval of children unlawfully transported to any of its 87 member states.

The convention came into law in Russia in 2011.

Russia has seen a number of international custody rows, including several with France and Finland.

Irina Belenkaya, a Russian national accused of kidnapping her daughter and orchestrating an attack on her French ex-husband, received a two-year suspended sentence in a French court in 2012. The husband had been awarded custody by a French court after their divorce in 2007, but the couple became embroiled in a bitter custody battle resulting in their daughter Elise being "kidnapped" back and forth three times from 2007 to 2009.

Several similar stories have involved Russian-Finnish children, such as the high-profile case of Rimma Salonen, who took her son Anton to Russia from Finland without the permission of his Finnish father.

After allegedly being prevented by Russian authorities from taking the boy back to Finland, the father smuggled his son over the border in the trunk of a diplomat's car, causing a diplomatic spat between the two countries.

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