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Draft Bill Wants to Restrict Entry for Foreigners Who 'Offend' Russia

By The Moscow Times

November 28, 2014

A new bill would allow Russia to deny entry to anyone who has offended the country's "national, historical, spiritual, cultural or other social values."

Russian lawmakers have drafted a vaguely worded bill allowing the country to deny entry to foreigners who have "offended" the state or its citizens, in a move that could give Moscow greater power to shut its borders to critics of the Kremlin.

According to the bill, published Thursday on the State Duma website and authored by two members of the ruling United Russia party, Russia would control its borders in line with the "principle of reciprocity," countering foreign countries' restrictions on the entry of Russian citizens with mirror measures.

The suggested amendments to Russia's migration law would also allow Russia to deny entry to foreign citizens and stateless persons who are perceived as having committed acts against the country's national interests, the Russian state or its individuals.

Russian officials have repeatedly accused the West of undermining its interests in recent months — accusing the U.S. and Saudi Arabia of holding down oil prices to punish Moscow and Western nations of trying to meddle in Ukraine, a country with which Russia has strong historical and cultural ties.

The bill would also allow Russia to deny entry to anyone who has offended the country's "national, historical, spiritual, cultural or other social values" — largely intangible concepts that could be used to prevent anyone critical of Russia's conservative administration from crossing the border.

In a note accompanying the bill, co-authors Deputy Rizvan Kurbanov and Senator Lyudmila Bokova said: "The [proposals] correspond to the generally recognized principles of international law while taking into account the relevant aspects of the current foreign policy situation."

Kurbanov and Bokova concluded that the amendments were necessary "to protect ... the rights and legitimate interests of the citizens of the Russian Federation, Russian society and our country as a whole."

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