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Russian Lawmaker Wants to Recall 'Leviathan' Film Funding

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Film director Andrei Zvyagintsev.

A firebrand Russian lawmaker famous for authoring anti-gay legislation is now calling for the makers of the award-winning film "Leviathan" to return the money they got from the government to make the film.

Vitaly Milonov, a member of St. Petersburg's legislative assembly, said in comments carried by the Interfax news agency on Saturday that the film, which features vociferous profanity, is a work "against the people, made with the people's money."

"Leviathan," which tells the story of a downtrodden Russian man fighting against a corrupt mayor's efforts to tear down his home, won best screenplay at this year's Cannes Film Festival and is up for an Oscar, but was initially denied release in Russia because of the numerous curse words.

Russia last year enacted a law prohibiting profanity in cinema, theater and other forms of art. "Leviathan," which was initially denied release in Russia, is now scheduled to appear in some

Russian theaters on Feb. 5 with the curse words removed.

Milonov told Interfax that he has appealed to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to have the state funding taken from the filmmakers.

"The film, which is clearly at odds with traditional Russian culture, discredits the classic school of national cinematography and incites hatred in society," he told the news agency, adding that the film contains an "array of Russophobic stereotypes aimed at creating a negative image of Russian society and the state."

Russia's Culture Ministry, which co-financed the film, echoed that sentiment, saying recently that the work was not deserving of state funding and that it would not support such projects in the future. "Leviathan" reportedly cost $3.4 million to make, but it was not immediately clear how much of that money was provided by the Russian government.

Yevgeny Savostyanov, the head of Russia's Coordination Council on Intellectual Property Protection, reportedly wrote in an open letter that he no longer wished to work with the Culture Ministry because he was "ashamed" of the crackdown.

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