

Russian Culture Ministry Reverses Plans to Ban Films That Undermine 'National Unity'

January 20, 2015



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The Culture Ministry has reversed plans to deny distribution licenses to films deemed harmful to Russia's "national unity," after the proposed restrictions drew widespread criticism.

A ministry spokesman said some of the requirements set for films seeking clearance for screening in Russian movie theaters and on television had been lifted, the Interfax news agency reported Monday.

One of the scrapped requirements would have allowed the government to deny a distribution license to any film deemed to contain "materials, information or data besmearing the national culture, creating a threat to the national unity and national security," the spokesperson was quoted as saying.

Film critics and distributors had expressed outrage at the restrictions, describing them as an

attempt to make filmmakers toe the Kremlin's line.

The proposed licensing rules were expected to take effect on Jan. 1 but were delayed while the Culture Ministry awaited feedback from other government agencies.

But after reviewing its draft rules, the Culture Ministry's "experts considered such a proposal to be excessive," a spokesperson was quoted by Interfax as saying.

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