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Estonia's Justice Ministry Wants Ban on Communist, Nazi Symbols

By Anna Dolgov

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A supporter of Russia's Communist party attends a May Day rally in Moscow, May 1, 2015.

Estonia's Justice Ministry is drafting a bill that would ban the public display of both Communist and Nazi symbols in the country, the agency's head was quoted as saying.

"I think it would be appropriate to prohibit the use of the symbols of those inhumane regimes that had occupied Estonia," Justice Minister Urmas Reinsalu was quoted by Russian news agency RIA Novosti as telling his country's ETV television Wednesday.

Organizers of public gatherings would be required to make sure that the proposed ban is observed at their events, he was quoted as saying.

Public displays of banned symbols would be treated as an administrative offense, not a criminal one, RIA Novosti reported, without specifying what punishment such a display might

entail.

Estonia — which was been annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II along with the other two Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania — had sharply criticized Russia's annexation last year of Crimea from Ukraine, expressing concerns for its own security.

The country also has a substantial Russian-speaking population, many of whom sympathize with Moscow and the past Soviet rule. The issue adds to Estonia's concerns, after Moscow claimed the need to protect Ukraine's Russian speakers as the guise for annexing Crimea and supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine.

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