The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Officials Call on Schools, Colleges to Fight Brainwashing by Islamic Extremists

By Anna Dolgov

June 26, 2015



Pavel Astakhov

Russia's children's rights ombudsman has appealed to the Education Ministry to step up efforts to prevent students from converting to extremist Islamic views, a news report said Friday, after a number of students left the country in an apparent attempt to fight alongside the Islamic State terrorist group.

In a letter to Education Minister Dmitry Livanov, ombudsman Pavel Astakhov argued that Russia's colleges need to "form a stable system of moral and meaningful foundations of personality, allowing [young people] to resist the ideology of extremism, nationalism, xenophobia and other negative social phenomena," Izvestia newspaper reported.

He specifically singled out Islamist recruitment efforts, urging vigilance and monitoring in

colleges, according to the report.

“Students should know how to avoid becoming the victims of radical Islamist recruiters, and whom to turn to in the event of encountering such a situation,” Astakhov was quoted as saying in his letter.

“The changes in the behavior of a victim who has given themselves over to radical Islamic views are very noticeable for the people around them, but not everybody considers it necessary to turn to educational officials and law enforcement bodies about this.”

His appeal comes on the heels of warnings by Russian security officials that hundreds of Russian nationals are believed to be fighting alongside Islamic State militants, and after a series of reports about students adopting radical views and seeking to join the terror group.

In one of the most publicized cases, Moscow State University student Varvara Karaulova was detained in Turkey and sent back to Moscow earlier this month after she allegedly tried to cross Turkey's border with Syria. Investigators are treating the young woman as a victim, officials have said.

The number of Russians who have successfully joined the terror group could be up to 2,000 people, according to various estimates, a deputy head of Russia's Security Council, Yevgeny Lukyanov, was cited as saying this week by the newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

Moscow is especially concerned about Islamist fighters returning home, with Lukyanov's boss, Security Council chief Nikolai Patrushev, warning in a recent interview that the militants' return will present the “gravest danger.”

Islamist recruitment efforts on Russia's social networks are largely aimed at young people, prompting increased calls for colleges and universities to counteract conversion attempts.

Communist lawmaker Valery Rashkin, a deputy head of the State Duma's ethnic affairs committee, also appealed to the education minister this month to appoint advisers at colleges whose job would be to counter extreme Islamist recruitment efforts, Izvestia reported.

In a country with a substantial Muslim population, Rashkin said the efforts could include inviting Muslim religious leaders to speak at colleges about “traditional Islam,” as opposed to the “hateful nature of the ideas promoted by Islamic fundamentalists,” or showing video footage of murders committed by Islamic State terrorists, Izvestia reported.

Original url:

https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/06/26/russian-officials-call-on-schools-colleges-to-fight-brain washing-by-islamic-extremists-a47709