The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Zombies Hazardous to Russian Children's 'Spiritual' Health – Human Rights Official

By Anna Dolgov

October 19, 2015



A senior human rights official in the presidential administration has called for an evaluation of toys sold in Russia's stores, claiming that many are hazardous to the psychological and "spiritual" health of young Russians, media reports said Monday.

Council member Yana Lantratova sent an appeal to the head of Russia's consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, Anna Popova, calling for the establishment of a public chamber that would evaluate toys' safety, the RIA Novosti news agency reported.

In addition to some toys made of potentially hazardous materials, Russian stores have been offering toys that could be dangerous to children's "psychological, spiritual and moral health," as well as "toys that openly promote Nazism," the letter was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti, which said it had a copy of the document.

Moscow's landmark Central Children's Store became the target of a criminal investigation early this year over the sale of toy busts of Nazi soldiers and officers, according to prosecutors.

Amid Russia's crackdown on Nazi imagery ahead of the May celebrations over the victory in World War II, security officials conducted raids on Moscow stores, looking for potential instances of "Nazi propaganda." Officials seized a kit for building models of World War II-era German military machines, a chess set with black pieces representing soldiers and officers of the Third Reich and white pieces representing Red Army fighters, and other goods deemed suspicious, Russian media reported.

Lantratova also argued that the emotional well-being of Russian children was endangered by toys, allegedly created by "American designers" and representing "monsters" and "corpses," pro-Kremlin daily Izvestia reported Monday.

The report did not elaborate, but Russian officials have repeatedly criticized the zombie imagery of Halloween, and called for banning the holiday in Russia.

Regional legislators in Siberia's Omsk region banned Halloween celebrations in all schools two years ago, saying Russian children had to be protected from "dangerous and morally corrupt U.S. cultural influence."

A member of the State Duma's committee on family, women and children's affairs, Olga Alimova, said she supported a safety evaluation of toys sold in Russia's stores, but advised against banning any toys, except those that turn out to be made of "toxic or radioactive" materials, Izvestia reported.

Other potentially unsafe toys should carry warnings, leaving it to the parents' discretion whether to buy them, she was quoted by Izvestia as saying.

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