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Russian Supreme Court Approves Bill Criminalizing Insulting National Anthem

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Young people sing Russian national anthem during a patriotic rally in Moscow.

The Russian Supreme Court has approved a draft bill introducing criminal punishment for insulting the country's national anthem, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday, citing the press service of Vadim Tyulpanov, one of the bill's authors.

According to the bill, insulting the Russian anthem should be equated to insulting the national coat of arms or the flag — both already protected by the law as Russian state symbols.

The maximum penalty for citizens for insulting the anthem is 3,000 rubles ($45), while those who insult the other state symbols may face up to year in prison, the bill's authors said, adding that the same penalty should be introduced for abusing the anthem.

The bill's explanatory note points out that the suggested penalty should be added to Russian Criminal Code in order to avoid a repeat of an incident that occurred in the Crimean city of Sevastopol last month, when the national anthem's lyrics were distorted during a public event.

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