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Ban on Smacking Children Violates Scripture, Says Russian Church

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The Russian Orthodox Church has denounced new laws against smacking children as a "violation of the Holy Scripture."

A new law restricting the use of corporal punishment against relatives would deprive families of "a right given to parents by God himself," a statement on the Moscow Patriarchate's official website read.

The Orthodox Bible tolerates "intelligent and loving use of physical punishment," said the Moscow Patriarchate's commission on family, motherhood and childhood values.

They described the amendment as having no moral justification or legal basis and of opposing the traditional family values established in Russian culture.

The statement specifies that children must be protected from physical violence that causes damage to their health.

The new amendment, signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday, outlines the first use of corporal punishment as an administrative offense. Criminal punishment can also be used for more serious beatings or the use of force if "motivated by hatred or hooliganism."

Senator and ultraconservative lawmaker Yelena Mizulina called on the Federation Council to revoke the amendment, calling it "anti-family" for "legalizing unwarranted intrusion into family affairs."

Writing on her official website, Mizulina claimed that even disciplining children with light slaps could lead to possible criminal prosecution for parents under the law. She stressed that Russian legislation already contained protection for the victims of domestic violence.

"It is excessive to impose criminal punishment on parents who slap their child," Russian Orthodox priest Fyodor Lyudogovsky told the Meduza website. "But the use of force can not be recognized as the good thing either."

"In their statement, the Moscow Patriarchate refer to parables from the Book of Proverbs and the Epistle to the Hebrews, texts which reflect social values from two or three thousand years ago," he said. "But everything changes."

The urge to use force "is usually caused by irritation, or feeling of helplessness and frustration," Lyudogovsky said. "From a Christian point of view, it may be regarded a sign that it is time to improve yourself."

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