The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia's Buddhists Want Ban on Religious Symbols in Bars, Clubs

November 21, 2016



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Members of Russia's Buddhist community are gathering signatures for a petition to ban the use of Buddhist symbolism in entertainment establishments.

"We, citizens of Russia, followers of the Buddhist religion, appeal to the public authorities to prohibit the use of the name, the statues and images of Buddha and Buddhist deities and Buddhist paraphernalia and symbols in entertainment establishments throughout the Russian Federation: clubs, bars, karaoke bars, restaurants," stated the petition on the Change.org website, which has been signed by almost 7,300 people.

The authors claim that in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yakutsk, Rostov, Orenburg, Tyumen, Taganrog, Krasnoyarsk, Novokuznetsk, Shakhty and other Russian cities, entertainment clubs, bars and restaurants called "Buddha Bars" or "Buddha Karaoke Bars" have been opening.

The petition writers claim that "naked women" have been photographed in such clubs using

Buddha statues as part of their "go-go dance" routines. They also objected to the serving of alcohol in such establishments.

The petition stressed that such an attitude to the Buddhist religion "is a gross and impermissible violation of the rights and feelings of believers throughout Russia." It further asks authorities to prohibit the use of Buddhist imagery in entertainment, promotional products, signs and posters.

Earlier the prosecutor of the Kemerovo region found that the use of Buddha statues in a Novokuznetsk bar to be an "insult to the feelings of religious believers." One Buddha Bar in Krasnoyarsk was fined 30,000 rubles under the same law.

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