

Bill Decriminalizing Domestic Violence Passes First Reading in Russian Parliament

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A bill decriminalizing domestic violence has passed its [first reading in Russia's State Duma](#).

Some 368 lawmakers voted in favor of the law, with just one deputy voting against the plans. One other deputy abstained from the vote.

The bill would remove the charge of "battery within families" from Russia's Criminal Code, downgrading it to an administrative offense. Criminal charges would only be brought against

offenders if familial beatings took place more than once a year.

The bill was spearheaded by ultra-conservative Russian lawmaker Yelena Mizulina, who is already notorious for successfully lobbying Russia's controversial "gay propaganda" law.

Mizulina first [took up the fight in July 2016](#), when President Vladimir Putin decriminalized other forms of assault and battery that did not cause actual bodily harm. Mizulina has called the decision to define battery within families as a more serious offense – alongside hooliganism and hate assaults — as "anti-family, and claims that the law undermines parents' "right" to beat their children.

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"Punishments [for offenses] can not contradict the system of social values that society holds on to," Mizulina said in a speech opening Wednesday's vote in the Duma. "In Russian traditional family culture parent-child relationships are built on the authority of the parents' power... The laws should support that family tradition."

The decision sparked outrage from women's rights activists, who believe the new legislation will make victims of domestic violence even more vulnerable. "These lawmakers believe that fines for domestic tyrants is better than criminal liability," [activist Alyona Popova wrote on Facebook](#).

"These people didn't propose legislation that would improve the court system or the law enforcement, they just supported transferring liability into fines. It means that an offender will now beat [his relatives] and pay a small fine."

According to Russian government statistics, 40 percent of all violent crimes are committed within the family. The figures correlate to 36,000 women being beaten by their partners every day and 26,000 children being assaulted by their parents every year.

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