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Russia's Ban on U.S. Adoptions Breaks Human Rights Law, Rules ECHR

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Russia’s ban on U.S. citizens adopting Russian children breaks human rights law, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled.

Forty-five U.S. citizens filed lawsuits against Moscow with the ECHR, both on behalf of themselves and on behalf of the 27 Russian children they wished to adopt.

The court ruled that the law violated claimants’ right to family life and illegally discriminated against the prospective parents on grounds of nationality.

The Russian government has been ordered to pay each family 3,000 euros ($3,200) in compensation, as well as $600 to cover legal costs.

The law, which came into force in January 2013, banned all U.S. couples from adopting Russian children, including those who were already part-way through adoption proceedings.

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Most of the American families involved had already spent time with their prospective children, many of whom suffered from serious illnesses or disabilities.

The law was named in honor of Dima Yakovlev, a Russian-born toddler who died of heatstroke in Virginia in 2008 after being left in a locked car by his adoptive parents. The couple was ultimately acquitted of involuntary manslaughter.

Russian officials claimed that the law protected children such as Dima from being mistreated by adoptive parents in the United States. However, critics slammed the law as a reaction to the United States' so-called Magnitsky List, which placed sanctions on high-ranking government officials which the U.S. accused of human rights violations.

Georgy Matyushkin, Russia's Representative at the European Court of Human Rights and Deputy Minister of Justice, told the Echo Moskvy radio station on Tuesday that Russia would appeal the decision.

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