The Moscow Times
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Russia Decriminalizes Domestic Violence

January 27, 2017



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The Russian parliament, the State Duma, has voted to remove the charge of domestic violence from Russia's criminal code.

The bill was adopted almost unanimously on its third reading, with 380 deputies voting in favor of the legislation. Just three lawmakers voted against the bill.

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The bill would downgrade the charge of "battery within families" — assaults which don't result in "substantial bodily harm" — to an administrative offense. Those found guilty will still be charged with a fine, but further criminal charges will only be brought against offenders if beatings take place more than once a year.

The law's advocates claim that including "battery within families" as a criminal offense could see parents punished for disciplining their children.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov is among the politicians to defend the law, telling journalists that family conflicts do "not necessarily constitute domestic violence." He also dismissed “calls to punish various expressions of family relationships” as unreasonable.

According to Russian government statistics, 40 percent of all violent crimes are committed within the family. The figures correlate with 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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