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Russian Woman Faces Prison for Lighting Her Cigarette With a Church Candle

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A 21-year-old woman in Belgorod faces criminal charges for sharing a photograph online that showed her lighting a cigarette using a candle in a Russian Orthodox church, according to the news agency RIA Novosti.

Local investigators say the woman committed a crime by publicly disrespecting the feelings of religious people. If convicted, the woman faces up to a year in prison.

Police say the photograph appeared on the Internet last May.

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In 2013, the Russian government adopted new "anti-blasphemy" legislation, introduced in

aftermath of the trial against the artist collective Pussy Riot. Designed to punish similar expressions that offend religious people, police have used the law to prosecute a variety of disrespectful kinds of behavior, ranging from nightclubs that use Buddhist symbols to angry young men arguing on social media.

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