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Politicians Blast Ukrainian Law Banning ‘Russian Cultural Products’ in Public Spaces

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Serg Glovny / Zuma / TASS

Russian politicians have criticized a new law passed in Ukraine’s western city of Lviv that bans “Russian-language culture products” in public places amid tense bilateral relations between the two neighboring countries.

On Tuesday evening, deputies of Lviv’s regional council passed a law banning the public use of "Russian-language cultural products" in the region. A copy of the law published on the council’s website says that it aims to “overcome the consequences of prolonged linguistic Russification” and will stay in place “until the occupation of Ukrainian territories comes to an end.”

In Russia, the law was met with derision and alarm, with some state media reporting it would be illegal to read Russian books, sing Russian songs or stage Russian plays.

Russian State Duma deputy and leader of the nationalist Rodina party, Alexei Zhuravlev, called supporters of the law “animals” and “Russophobes.”

"Soon these reactionists will start to tear out the tongues of their fellow citizens if they decide that a particular tongue is too Russian,” he tweeted on Wednesday.

Sergei Tsekov, a member of the Federation Council’s International Affairs Committee, said the new law “violates international law as well as the Ukrainian constitution,” the state-run RT news network reported.

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Russian-Ukrainian ties have deteriorated since Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and support for rebels in eastern Ukraine.

Language in particular has been a sensitive issue in the two nation’s relationship. Following Ukraine's Maidan uprising in February 2014, the country's parliament abolished a law allowing regions to declare Russian a second official language, sparking protests in Russia.

The Lviv law, which was supported by a slight majority in the regional council, did not specify what it considers to be “Russian language cultural products.”

The law also recommended for “local authorities in other parts of the country to adopt similar decisions on the establishment of a moratorium.”

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