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Russian Conservatives Try to Regulate Halloween, Again

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Andrei Lyubimov / Moskva News Agency

Every year before Halloween, religious groups and conservative politicians in Russia renew their calls to ban the celebration, saying it is an anti-Christian holiday that cannot coexist with the country's traditions.

Attempts to restrict the day have ramped up over the years, as Moscow's relationship with the West has continued to deteriorate.

Two years ago, the leader of Russian-annexed Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, called Halloween a "means of cultural and spiritual aggression directed at destroying the traditional values of Russia."

Here are some of the more bizarre attempts to regulate the holiday this year:

— Outspoken State Duma deputy Vitaly Milonov has called on the education ministry to ban Halloween, saying it is based on "the worship of dark mystical forces, Satan and the glorification of the traditions of dark Celtic death worship."

— Priests from the Orthodox diocese in Chelyabinsk have warned that the "spiritual relativism" of Halloween can lead to incidents such as the Kerch school shooting of Oct. 17, in which 21 people were killed by a lone shooter.

— An archpriest from the Moscow region called on Orthodox believers to refrain from "going into those stinking taverns and getting drunk among all those pumpkins with candles," on a day that is intended for "unscrupulous and brainless people."

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— Russian state media cited a psychologist at the Moscow State University as saying that those who wear costumes risk changing their inner state for a prolonged period of time and "losing touch with reality." Another psychologist cited by state media compared the inner psyche of violent killers to the "death atmosphere" of Halloween.

— A Moscow college reportedly banned students from wearing zombie costumes and dancing to the Michael Jackson classic "Thriller" at an event two weeks before Halloween, saying that it disrespected the victims of the Kerch mass shooting.

— Meanwhile, the Roskachestvo consumer rights watchdog released a list of advice for choosing a "tasty and useful" Halloween pumpkin among three types: large-fruited, hard-tailed and butternut — each of which have their own benefits and disadvantages.

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