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Moscow Cinema Accuses Authorities of Censorship in 'Death of Stalin' Row

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The Death of Stalin

One of Moscow's few English-language movie theaters has asked the Russian Constitutional Court to settle a dispute over censorship stemming from its release of director Armando Iannucci's "The Death of Stalin" last year.

Pioner Cinema was raided and fined in early 2018 for screening the satirical film on the power struggle that took place following the Soviet leader's death. Russia's Culture Ministry revoked "The Death of Stalin's" license over concerns that it contained "ideological animosity."

Related article: Watching 'The Death of Stalin' in Moscow

The theater has asked the Constitutional Court to declare Russia's distribution license norms unconstitutional, alleging that the norms amount to "preliminary and subsequent censorship," Interfax reported Friday.

“The current film censorship system violates the applicant’s rights to disseminating information and freedom of enterprise,” said Pioner Cinema’s legal representative, the Bartolius law firm.

This system cannot be justified because it uses measures that are “disproportionate and unacceptable in civilized society,” Bartolius was quoted by Interfax as saying.

Related article: Why Russia Has a Problem With ‘The Death of Stalin’ (Op-ed)

The Kremlin denied claims that the Culture Ministry had censored the film on the Russian market last year.

Pioner Cinema also reportedly disputed Russia’s contentious anti-extremism law which has been used in recent years to target people for inciting racial, religious or other forms of hate.

President Vladimir Putin last year partially softened the law, which now fines first-time violators and jails repeat offenders for up to five years.

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