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Legalizing Polygamy Will 'Guarantee' Women's Rights in Russia, Moscow's Muslim Leader Says

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Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency

Russia can overcome its gender-related issues by legalizing polygamy, the leader of Moscow's Muslims has said.

Polygamy, the practice of taking more than one spouse, is frowned upon by an overwhelming majority of Russians. While polygamy is not permitted under Russian law, it remains commonplace in the country's predominantly Muslim republics of the North Caucasus.

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"Legalizing polygamy would guarantee women's rights," Ildar Alyautdinov, the mufti of Moscow, was quoted as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency Wednesday.

Pointing to official data that shows women outnumbering men by 10 million in Russia, he

stressed the importance of a "legislative-level protective mechanism for women to become full-fledged second wives."

"[Polygamy] will help solve many social woes. Additionally, there'd be much less sinfulness and fornication that's spreading so rapidly," Alyautdinov was quoted as saying.

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Alyautdinov's controversial comments follow Russia's grand mufti Ravil Gainutdin telling state television Monday that men in the country's majority-Muslim regions should be allowed multiple wives to tackle cheating.

Legal polygamy would "open a Pandora's box," Irina Kirkora, the executive secretary of President Vladimir Putin's human rights council, told RIA Novosti on Wednesday.

The United Nations' convention on ending discrimination against women says that polygamy should be discouraged and outlawed because such marriages are unequal and have negative impacts on women and children.

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