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Russian Teen 'Insults Religious Feelings' With Church Candle TikTok

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Russia signed a law criminalizing acts that "insult believers' religious feelings" in 2013. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Authorities in Russia's Far East have opened a criminal case against a local teen over a TikTok video that shows him lighting a cigarette with a candle inside a church, a move they qualified as a violation of Russia's law against insulting religious feelings.

Investigators in the Zabaikalsky region said Friday that the unnamed 18-year-old was caught in July "demonstrably" lighting a cigarette on an altar candle at a Russian Orthodox church in the city of Chita.

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The chita.ru news website on July 26 published a video of the teenager walking into the cathedral and using the flame of a lit candle on the altar to light a cigarette. A Bongo Cat version of the Billie Eilish hit "Bad Guy" is playing in the background.

If found guilty, the TikToker faces up to three years in jail.

The Chita diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, however, said that it would not like to see the young perpetrator behind bars.

“I’ve met both himself and his guardians. The young man expressed sincere regret for his actions,” the diocese's head, Metropolitan Dimitry, said.

“Therefore, the Chita diocese intends to ask the investigation to show mercy,” he told chita.ru.

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