

Mixed-Marriage Ban for Russian Muslims Sparks Backlash

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Islam is the second-largest religion behind Orthodox Christianity in secular Russia. **Yegor Alejev / TASS**

A religious ruling that [bans](#) Muslim men in Russia from marrying non-Muslim women sparked backlash from senior Muslim clerics across the country this week.

The ruling by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (DUM)'s advisory council of scholars says that interfaith marriages between Muslim men and non-Muslim women are allowed “in isolated cases” that only local muftis can approve.

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“Most interfaith marriages result in a number of problems,” the council of scholars known as the ulema said in the ruling, pointing to possible disagreements over raising children and “absolutely different worldviews, cultures and education.”

A number of high-level Russian Muslim figures disagreed with the legally nonbinding ruling

when it was made public this week.

The regional DUM's ulema in the republic of Tatarstan said it disagreed with the scholars' "direct interpretation of the verses in the Holy Quran," the state-run RIA Novosti news agency [reported](#) Tuesday.

The Spiritual Assembly of Muslims of Russia, an association of regional Muslim organizations, said it "[respects](#)" the ruling but referred to the Quran's express permission for Muslim men to marry Christian and Jewish women.

The DUM's deputy chairman Damir Mukhetdinov [admitted](#) that "in this particular matter, the opinions differ and part of our clergy does not support or only partially supports the fatwa in question."

The DUM scholars later [clarified](#) that non-Muslim women could marry Muslim men as long as they "respect Islamic canon and don't prevent husbands from raising children in Islamic traditions."

The ulema's deputy chairman Ildar Alyautdinov, however, maintained that the controversial ruling was prompted by "increasing divorce rates, society's weakening religious foundations and lack of spiritual education in families."

"There are many interfaith marriages in Russia," he said. "Practice shows that children don't know what faith they belong to when growing up."

"In most cases, interfaith marriages are dissolved due to frequent misunderstandings between the spouses and their relatives."

Islam is the second-largest religion behind Orthodox Christianity in secular Russia, and its estimated 20-million Muslim population is [expected](#) to more than double in the next 15 years.

Islamic law prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men while allowing Muslim men to marry "people of the book," an Islamic term that refers to Jews and Christians.

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