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Russia Considers Banning Surrogacy for Unmarried People, Foreigners – RBC

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Russia is one of the few countries worldwide where commercial surrogacy is allowed. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Foreigners and unmarried Russians could be banned from having children with the help of a surrogate under a new draft bill, the RBC news website reported Wednesday.

Russia is one of the few countries worldwide where commercial surrogacy is allowed, but a backlash against foreign surrogacy has been growing with warnings that women and children are being exploited by wealthy foreigners. The country has also pursued conservative legislation in hopes of reversing its declining birth rates.

The draft bill's explanatory note says that banning foreigners from using surrogate services in Russia is needed in order to combat the child trafficking market, RBC reported, citing a copy of the bill it said it obtained. It adds that the use of surrogacy by single men and women does not fully comply with the principles of motherhood, childhood and family in Russia which fall under state legal protection.

Only married couples who cannot have children for medical reasons would be able to use surrogacy services if the bill is passed. These couples must also be married for over a year, between 25 and 55 years old and have a valid doctor's recommendation, the bill's text reportedly states.

State Duma deputy Oksana Pushkina told RBC that the bill contradicts the Russian Constitution, which guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law and court.

"Denying one the opportunity to become a mom or dad is a crime. A huge number of children are raised by only one parent. If we follow the logic of the authors of the bill, then such children should be taken away from single parents, because this is an 'unconventional family'," said Pushkina, who heads the Duma's Committee on Family, Women and Children.

One of the bill's co-authors, State Duma Vice Speaker Pyotr Tolstoy, responded by saying that "it is better for a child to grow up in a complete family," noting that the bill would also prevent same-sex couples from having children with a surrogate.

"It is assumed that parents make this decision together and go in search of a surrogate mother, and not just the so-called single fathers who live together and have the resources to have a child, as if they are getting a puppy," he told RBC.

Last summer, conservative lawmakers introduced a bill that would prohibit transgender people from adopting children, but the legislation was eventually withdrawn after backlash. In October, reports said that Russia's Investigative Committee planned to arrest several men suspected of trafficking children born with the help of surrogate mothers.

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