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Russian Senate Speaker Slams Eurovision Pick ‘Russian Woman’ as ‘Nonsense’

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Manizha has said her song, written last year on International Women’s Day, is "about the transformation of a woman's self-awareness over the past few centuries in Russia." **Valery Sharifulin / TASS**

The speaker of Russia’s upper-house Federation Council on Wednesday criticized the lyrics to the country’s selection for the Eurovision song contest as “nonsense” and demanded a review of how it was chosen.

Russia announced earlier this month that it would send Tajik-born singer-songwriter Manizha to this year’s Eurovision contest in the Netherlands, where she will perform her song “Russian Woman.” The song discusses resisting sexist stereotypes and finding empowerment as a woman.

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Speaking at a Federation Council meeting, Valentina Matviyenko called the lyrics “some type of mumbo-jumbo, some type of nonsense.”

“I don't understand what it is at all. What is it about?” Interfax quoted Matviyenko as saying.

Earlier at the meeting, Senator Elena Afanasyeva harshly criticized the song, calling it “aggressive” and “a set of phrases from an immature 30-year-old girl with unresolved personal problems ... What do Russian women have to do with it?”

Matviyenko instructed Afanasyeva to ask the state-run Channel One broadcaster, which hosts the nationwide vote for Russia’s Eurovision selection each year, for clarification on “how voting is conducted.”

“Everything is somehow really strange, to put it mildly,” the Federation Council speaker said.

Manizha has said her song, written last year on International Women’s Day, is "about the transformation of a woman's self-awareness over the past few centuries in Russia."

The announcement that Manizha had been selected to represent Russia at Eurovision sparked racist backlash against her Tajik background.

Conservative groups also called for a ban on the music video and Manizha’s participation at Eurovision, saying the lyrics incite "hatred towards men, which undermines the foundations of a traditional family."

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