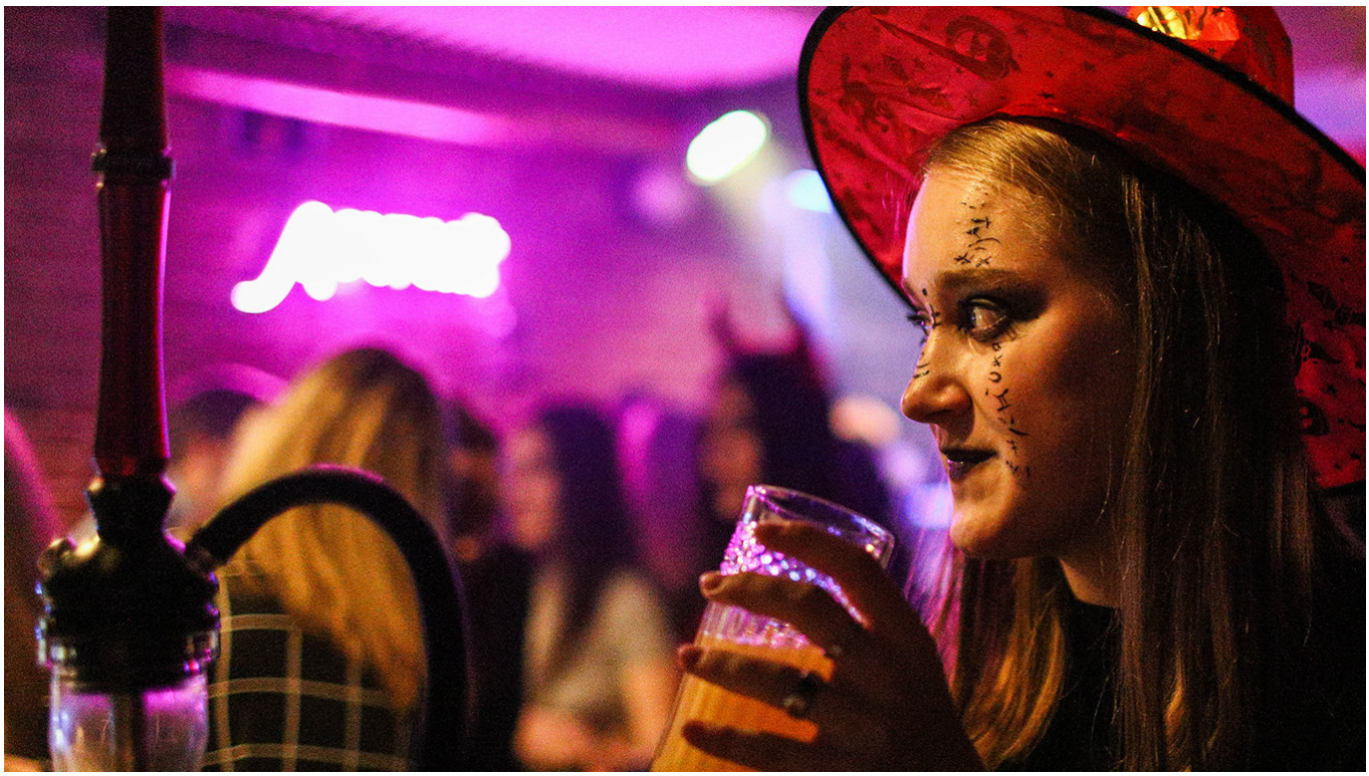
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Russian Lawmaker Calls for Ban on Halloween in Schools

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People wear costumes during a Halloween party at a bar in the city of Omsk. **Yevgeny Sofiychuk / TASS**

A senior lawmaker in Russia's upper-house Federation Council on Thursday called for a ban on Halloween celebrations in schools and universities, denouncing the holiday as a "Western" cultural import.

"We need to do everything to ensure that this Western holiday is simply forgotten by the public and never again remembered," Natalia Kosikhina, a senator from the ruling United Russia party, told the state-run news agency RIA Novosti.

"That's why it's important for us to not only minimize how often it's mentioned in the media, advertisements and stores, but also to restrict its celebration at schools and universities," she added.

According to Kosikhina, who has served as a senator from the Yaroslavl region since 2018, Russian society is divided over the issue of children dressing up as "dead people and evil spirits."

“I can’t help but agree with those who argue that worshiping ‘dark forces’ — even as a form of entertainment — is wrong,” the lawmaker said. “But a total ban will face pushback, and young people will want to celebrate this holiday even more.”

Related article: A Halloween Trick That Turned into a Pumpkin Treat

State Duma lawmaker Andrei Svintsov, who serves as a member of the nationalist Liberal Democratic Party from the Moscow region, earlier told journalists he believes Halloween should be “repackaged” and made into a “traditional” holiday.

“We already ban so many things. We’re annoying people,” Svintsov told the broadcaster RTVI on Wednesday. “We need to cheer them up. We need to think of a format that instills our citizens with positive emotions."

Halloween, which is not widely celebrated in Russia, has for years been the target of politicians and government officials who say they reject Western cultural influences.

Last October, authorities in the Far East republic of Sakha (Yakutia) banned Halloween celebrations at schools and replaced them with activities that “strengthen spiritual moral values, develop ideas of patriotism and preserve historical heritage.”

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