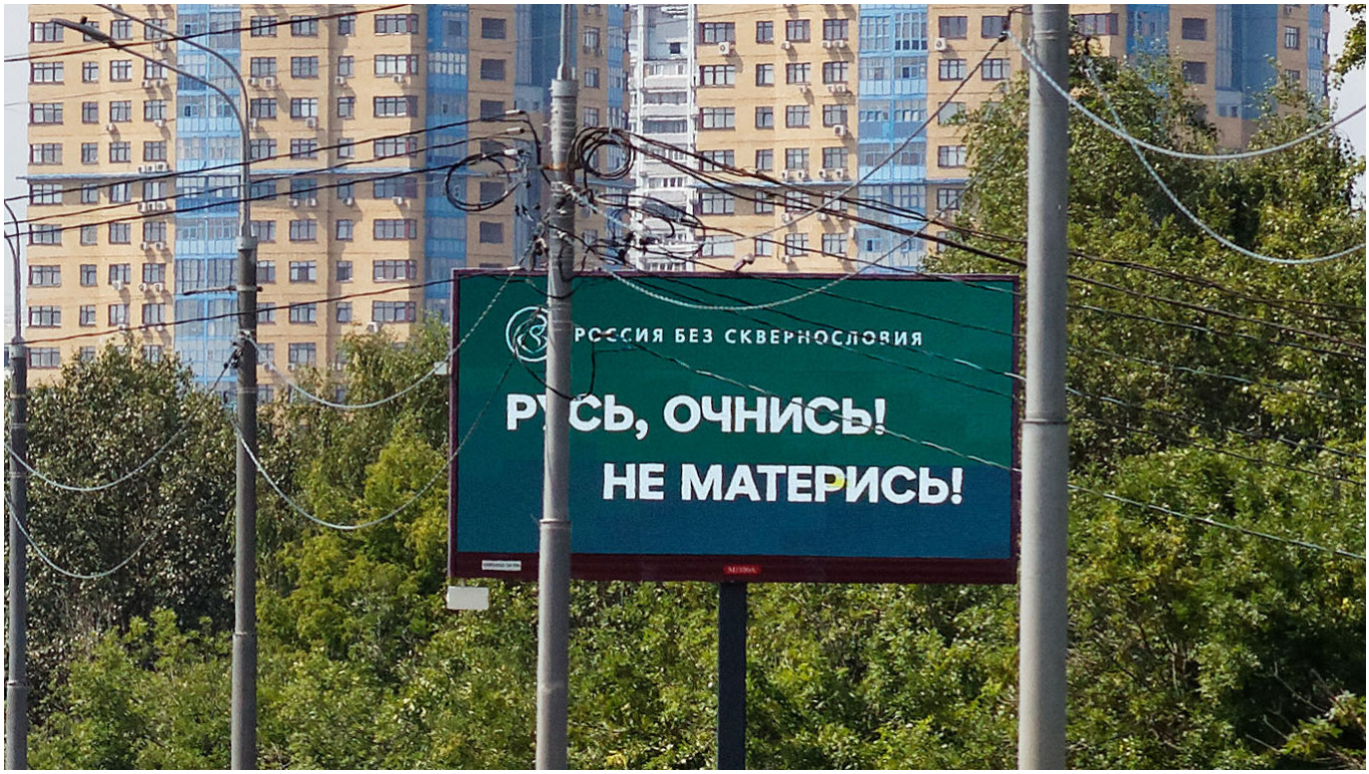
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Russian Linguists Call for Protection of Curse Words

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A billboard in Moscow reads: "Russia wake up! Stop swearing!" **Retired electrician**

Linguists at Russia's Academy of Sciences are calling for the protection of curse words after the head of the Russian Orthodox Church urged State Duma lawmakers to address what he described as the increased usage of obscenities in society.

"Cursing has clearly increased," said Vladimir Pakhomov, a research fellow at the V.V. Vinogradov Institute of Russian Language at RAS, in comments to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency published on Monday.

"Paradoxical as it may sound, linguists are now putting forward the idea that swearing should be protected and preserved," Pakhomov said. "We need to limit the use of obscene language specifically so that we don't lose this unique group of words, which carry a lot of power."

While the linguist said he endorsed a recent plea by Russian Orthodox Church head Patriarch Kirill to impose certain restrictions on public obscenity, he stressed the need to "protect and preserve" curse words and expressions rather than trying to eradicate them.

Pakhomov suggested that Russians should be taught to know when and how to use obscenities appropriately.

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On Friday, Patriarch Kirill addressed lawmakers in the lower-house State Duma, urging them to "find a way" to strip the "spiritual disease of foul language" of the popularity it currently enjoys in Russia.

"Although public profanity is legally classed as a minor offense, in practice, it's becoming more accepted in society," he said.

Under Russian law, which defers to police and prosecutors to define curse words, using obscenities in public is punishable by a fine or up to 15 days in detention.

"We need to find a way to deprive swearing of the popularity it has been given. This is a battle for people's minds and even their hearts," Patriarch Kirill said.

"If we could fight obscenities just as we now strive to fight alcoholism, it would… break with the tradition that defiled and deformed Russian culture and harmed human communication," he told lawmakers.

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