

A Lawmaker Said a Domestic Violence Law Would Undermine Families. Then Came the Backlash.

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Nikita Kozlov / unsplash

Russian women have called on the authorities to adopt a domestic violence law as lawmakers debate whether such legislation would discourage marriage amid the Kremlin's push to promote what it calls "traditional values."

Russia decriminalized first-time domestic violence offenses causing "minor harm" in 2017. [Attempts](#) by activists and opposition lawmakers to pass legislation to protect victims in the years since have so far been unsuccessful.

In videos circulated on social media, women criticized lawmaker Nina Ostanina's claim that a domestic violence law could make men avoid marriage because they would fear punishment over what she described as women's "impulsive complaints" to police.

"We, women, will not get married until a law on domestic violence is passed," said blogger

Farida Shirinova, who has 659,000 followers on Instagram.

“No decent man will be scared away from marriage [by such a law],” she [said](#).

“What does it mean that it will scare men away? Which men? It’s a warning sign only for those men who beat women, because a normal, decent man is not afraid of the court or the law — he would never allow himself to raise his hand against a woman,” blogger Maria Golovinskaya said to her 2.8 million followers.

Related article: [Despite Costly Programs and an Intensified Family Values Campaign, Russian Women Aren’t Having More Children](#)

The debate over domestic violence legislation was renewed last month after the New People party [introduced](#) a bill criminalizing acts of domestic abuse, a move that could also appeal to voters ahead of the September parliamentary elections.

Ostanina, who chairs the State Duma’s Family, Women and Children Committee, criticized the initiative.

"Eight out of every 10 marriages in Russia already end in divorce,” she said. “If all 10 end in divorce, is there any point in adopting such a law? Will young people still want to get married if this law is passed?”

“Men will be afraid, because any physical contact with a wife at home, based on what are sometimes impulsive complaints by our women, could be treated as an assault on her physical or mental well-being. That’s why we need to think twice before cutting once,” she said.

Ostanina’s comments sparked online backlash, with many women questioning if lawmakers “really think that if a man is not allowed to hit a woman, he simply won’t get married.”

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Others [drew](#) attention to the fact that Ostanina’s son was sentenced in 2012 to 12.5 years in prison for murder.

“The most disturbing part is hearing such words from a woman who is prepared to treat women’s safety as an acceptable price for preserving marriage statistics,” [said](#) Ksenia Goryacheva, the author of the New People bill. “So a thousand women killed every year by their husbands is considered a smaller problem than a hypothetical thousand marriages that never happen?”

Ostanina [sued](#) Goryacheva for defamation, accusing her of “arbitrarily interpreting” what she had said.

Following the backlash, Ostanina this week [proposed](#) restoring criminal liability for first-time assaults against family members.

Domestic violence has long been a serious problem in Russia.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to [warnings](#) that domestic violence cases could increase as more men return from the front lines.

According to a 2024 [survey](#) by independent pollster Russian Field, about 90% of respondents supported a law introducing criminal penalties for domestic violence.

Since the start of the war, Russian authorities have intensified promoting so-called "traditional values" and encouraged Russians to marry young and have larger families as the country grapples with a deepening demographic crisis.

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