

Finland Takes Away Russian Mom's Kids Again

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Finnish authorities have placed Russian citizen Anastasia Zavgorodnyaya's four children in protective custody for the second time in as many months due to noncompliance with a rehabilitation program, the Foreign Ministry said Friday.

"Social workers and police removed all four children from her apartment, where she attempted to hide them from authorities," the ministry said, adding that it would ensure that the children's rights as Russian citizens would be upheld.

Husband Ehab Ahmed Zaki Ahmed, a Finnish and Sudanese citizen, had complained to authorities that his access to the children had been "unlawfully limited," the statement said, adding that Ahmed and the kids would now live temporarily at a social center.

In late September, the children were briefly taken into protective custody after the couple's 6-year-old daughter told schoolteachers that Ahmed had spanked her. Finland banned physical

punishment of children in 1983.

Zavgorodnyaya told Interfax in early October that the family was to live at a social center for a month so that Finnish authorities could observe their relations.

On Nov. 7, a Finnish social worker called Zavgorodnyaya and said her children were to be taken into custody "immediately," Rimma Salonen of the Russian Mothers organization told Interfax.

Zavgorodnyaya informed the Russian Embassy on Thursday that social workers had taken her children away, the Foreign Ministry said.

In a statement the next day, Russian children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov called the measure "inadequate and excessive" and said it "threatened the life and mental health of the children."

Astakhov added that police had not shown Zavgorodnyaya proper documentation.

The Russian Embassy said it would keep in touch with Zavgorodnyaya and assist her and her children in the matter. The children were given Russian citizenship in early October and handed over to Zavgorodnyaya at the time.

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