

Russia's Crocodile Tears For Its Spurned Children

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The passage of the law prohibiting U.S. citizens from adopting Russian orphans was accompanied by a pro-Kremlin propaganda campaign under the slogan of "Stop the trafficking of orphans!" and a series of contradictory statements by officials regarding the timing and mechanisms for implementing the new legislation.

Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said in late December that the U.S.-Russian agreement on child adoptions would be terminated on Jan. 1 without any transitional period. On Jan. 9, the Foreign Ministry said the agreement had not been "suspended" but "terminated" in connection with the new law coming into force. On Jan. 10, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov acknowledged that the agreement would remain in effect for another year. The next day, Peskov promised that the U.S. parents who had already received court approval to adopt Russian orphans prior to Jan. 1 could proceed with the adoptions.

The U.S.–Russian adoption agreement, which will remain in force until Jan. 1, 2014, only sets out the rules and requirements binding on both sides in the adoption process. It does not actually authorize U.S. citizens to adopt Russian children. That right is regulated by the Russia's Family Code.

Yet it is precisely because of this agreement that Russian officials have turned the question of U.S. citizens adopting Russian orphans into some sort of trade dispute. The adoption "trade" has always required adoptive parents — and not only U.S. citizens — to give a large number of bribes to hospital and orphanage employees. Calls by so-called Russian patriots to halt the "export of orphans" imply the existence of a domestic market in orphans, but in reality it underscores the corrupt practices that permeate both foreign and domestic adoptions.

Russia responded to the U.S. Magnitsky Act by embracing the trafficking of children. By banning U.S. citizens from adopting Russian orphans, the president and parliament have made the fate of Russian children dependent on the actions of another state. By opting to "bargain" over every child, lawmakers and leaders are attempting to save face and win public relations points with conservative members of Putin's core electorate.

The angrier the words that Russian "patriots" hurl at Washington, the greater their chances of currying favor with the country's leadership. All of the talk about international obligations and concern for the welfare of Russia's orphans is just another weak attempt to save face.

This comment appeared as an editorial in Vedomosti.

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