

OSCE Concerned by Ban on Red Army Criticism

By [The Moscow Times](#)

June 27, 2013

The  **Moscow Times**

VIENNA, June 27 (RIA Novosti) — A bill to outlaw criticism of the Red Army's actions during World War II is "potentially dangerous" for media freedom in Russia, an official with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said Wednesday.

The proposed bill envisages fines of up to \$15,000 and a prison term of up to five years for denying the Red Army's role in "maintaining international peace," "dissemination of deliberately false information" about the Red Army and attempts to "rehabilitate" Nazism.

Also covered by the bill are attempts to criticize the outcomes of the 1946 Nuremberg Trials which sentenced the key leaders of the Third Reich to death or jail, or criticism of the Allied forces actions during the war.

"I call on the Russian authorities to carefully review the proposed changes as they go beyond the mere banning of the glorification of Nazism. A narrow application of such a law might lead

to its abuse and suppress political and critical speech on issues of history and eventually affect freedom of the media," the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic, said in a statement.

"It is legitimate for states to fight xenophobia, hatred and any justification of Nazism. However, I believe that the courts in the Russian Federation have sufficient legal instruments to deal with these phenomena," she said.

Any legislative provisions criminalizing speech should avoid vague language and be restricted to instances of intentional and dangerous incitement to violence, the official said.

"The public has the right to be informed about matters of concern, including on differing views on any historical debate, even if it is painful or provocative. In this the media is vital and its role should be respected," Mijatovic said.

She also said this legal initiative should be considered in the context of other recent legislative amendments, including the bill imposing fines for promoting homosexuality among minors and the bill that makes offending religious believers' feelings a criminal offense.

"A criminalization of speech — as suggested by the recent initiatives — could restrict freedom of expression and freedom of media, stifle public debate and thus undermine democracy and human rights," Mijatovic said.

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